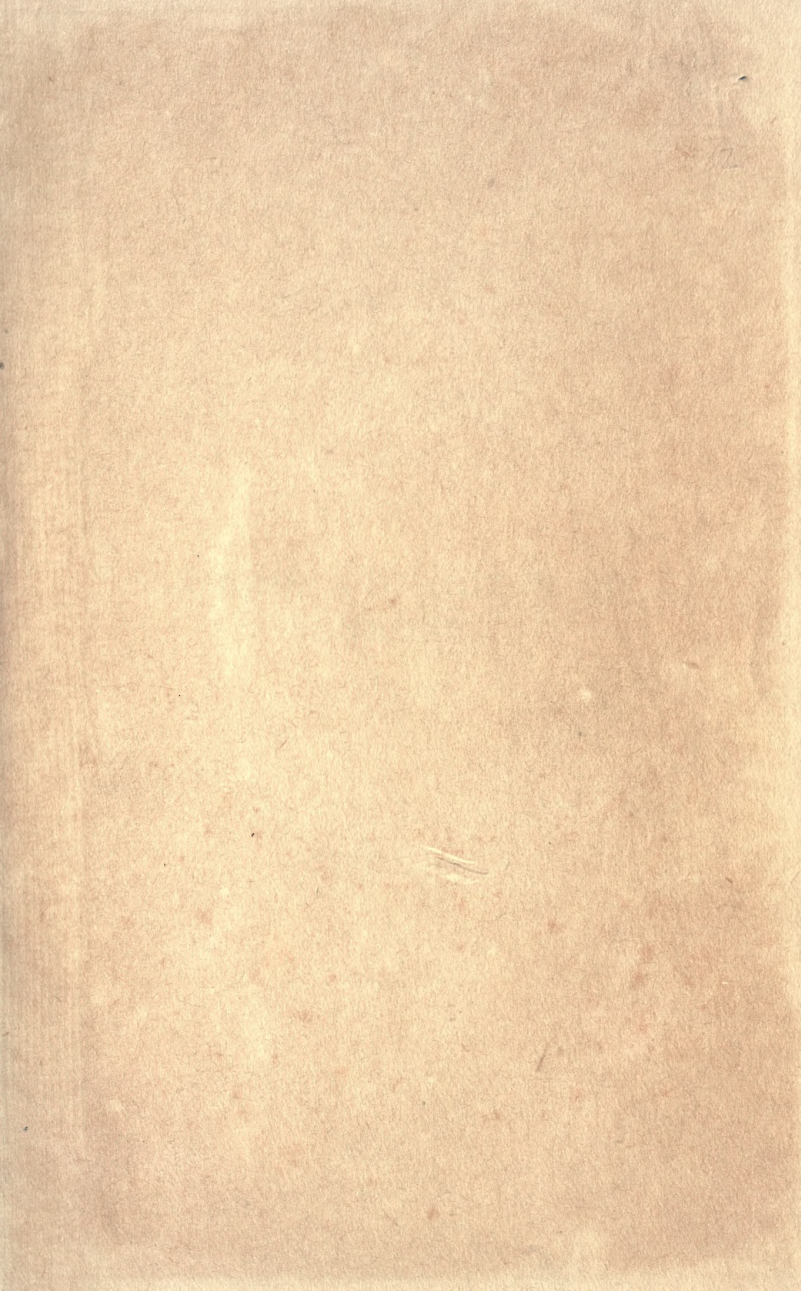


J. H. Russell



SERMONS AND NOTES OF
SERMONS

Nihil Obstat

GEORGIUS CANONICUS MULLAN

Censor Deputatus.

Imprimatur



HENRICUS

Epūs Tipasit

EDIMBURGI

die 10 Septembris 1920

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

BY

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PRIEST OF THE BIRMINGHAM ORATORY

EDITED BY

FATHERS OF THE BIRMINGHAM ORATORY

LONDON AND EDINBURGH
SANDS & COMPANY

1920

1870
Laurel

PREFACE

FATHER HENRY IGNATIUS DUDLEY RYDER was a member of the Birmingham Oratory from 1856 to his death in 1907; and from the time of his ordination, in 1863, until he was handicapped by illness in the early years of this century, he preached in his turn in the Church of the Oratory. In his life-time he had no particular renown as a preacher, and during the whole of his career he preached perhaps not more than half-a-dozen times out of our church, and certainly never outside Birmingham. Thus the sermons in this volume must be accepted for what they are—discourses, not prepared for special occasions, but preached in the ordinary routine of parochial work; more than this they do not profess to be.

Further it should be remembered that Father Ryder was a son of St Philip, and inherited the traditions of the “Apostle of Rome,” who enjoined upon his followers a plain and familiar style of preaching, avoiding all elaboration not only in thought but also in diction. His preaching was conditioned by this principle of pulpit oratory: he discoursed, as St Philip wished, “in a useful and popular way.” He spoke to an audience whom he knew, and to whom he was known, with a know-

PREFACE

ledge that comes from the intimacies of a life spent amid the same surroundings, where life is not intense, and where things change but little with the passing years.

And if the matter of his sermons was plain, as became the Oratorian tradition, the manner of their delivery was not less so. They were carefully prepared beforehand, and the preacher made simply no pretence of spontaneity: the manuscript was rather ostentatiously extracted from the breast-pocket of his cassock, and brandished in full view of his audience without any attempt at concealment. Usually they were—almost illegibly—written on odd sheets of note-paper, but sometimes, on the more important Feasts, they were carefully written out in full on foolscap paper, and then, before the sermon began, this was produced from beneath his cotta, carefully unfolded, and smoothed out before him. Such a proceeding may have obscured the merits of the preacher, but it certainly revealed the candour of the man. In fact he was perfectly natural, not only out of the pulpit, but, what is much less usual, in the pulpit; and this saving grace preserved him from the pitfall of the popular orator—the enunciation of the obvious with the unction and emphasis that befit a newly-discovered truth. It is the artificial man who utters platitudes; the natural man is original and spontaneous, if not in thought, at least in expression, and Father Ryder, in spite of appearances, was both. He possessed, too, the happy knack or gift of illustration and apt analogy in an eminent degree, only less striking than Cardinal Newman. Instance after instance will strike the mind of the

PREFACE

reader. To force his points home upon his hearers, he drew upon his wide reading, for he was a reader all his life in the bypaths of literature, and he never hesitated, if it served his purpose, to repeat time after time the same anecdote.

But unhappily he, for one possessed of so exquisite a sense of style and for one who wrote so much (as his note-books abundantly prove), produced but little. There is, however, an explanation of this seeming anomaly: he was one of those whose powers of criticism are directed mainly against themselves, and his literary fastidiousness was his undoing. Nothing short of the best would satisfy him in his own work, although no one was more appreciative of the attempts of others. Consequently he wrote much, but published little; and certainly he never entertained the thought that his sermons would be deemed worthy of publication. The manuscripts containing them were found after his death in his desk, done up in ill-assorted bundles. They represent the fruits of a ministry extending over forty years, produced under the spur of necessity, as circumstances demanded, and as time allowed. Hence they bear the imprint of the circumstances of their origin: none are polished works of art, but many are finished compositions, whereas others again are mere outlines—rough sketches of what he meant to say. Sometimes he creeps along the ground, sometimes he rises to heights of impassioned and lyric splendour; yet all enshrine some thought worthy of preservation, and all contain one sentence at least, which could not be better expressed otherwise. He was a master of language, at times not

PREFACE

unworthy of comparison with his master Newman, and, if this be not apparent throughout this volume, at any rate here and there his mastery of English stands revealed in his chosen words and balanced phrases.

The sermons do not belong to a single period, nor even to one phase of his career, but are, as it were, the flotsam and jetsam of his long life as a priest; and this fact accounts for many differences in tone and style, since some are the works of one who has not yet attained to perfect self-expression, while others embody the wisdom of his riper years. But, *quantum valeant*, be it much or little, they are now given to the public; if they meet with appreciation, a further volume of occasional and more formal sermons will be published.

Father Ryder was born on January 3rd, 1837, of an old Anglican family, and his grandfather, an Evangelical, became Bishop of Lichfield. His father, however, was one of those who soon followed Newman into the Church, and so he only just escaped being a convert in the full sense. His connection with Newman began when he was a boy of twelve, as a private pupil at the Oratory, and endured until the death of the latter in 1890. He was the youngest, and, by a few years, the last survivor of that favoured band of "my dearest brothers of this House, the Priests of the Birmingham Oratory," whose names the dedication of the *Apologia* has made melodious in English literature. The influence of Newman was the most potent factor in his life; what he would have been, had he not lived under the shadow of a greater than himself, we can only vaguely speculate. A circum-

PREFACE

stance of this nature provides a stimulus, but also acts as a deterrent; and the realisation that there were heights higher than his highest, apart from other considerations, made him diffident of his own powers and singularly averse from rushing into print. Under other circumstances, perhaps, his work would have been more voluminous, but the quality could scarcely have been as exquisite. As it is, it is almost negligible in quantity, and what there is does not belong to one *genre*. He first made his mark in controversy, as a young man of scarcely thirty, when, at the time of the Vatican Council, he drew his virgin sword against the doughty exponent of the extremest infallibilist view, Dr Ward; the few pamphlets in which he expressed his own opinions were slight in bulk, but weighty enough to provoke his adversary—no mean judge in matters theological—into paying him the compliment of being “by far the best theologian in England.” Some years later he entered the lists against Dr Littledale’s “Plain Reasons against joining the Church of Rome” with his “Catholic Controversy,” and altogether demolished the pretensions of that egregious work. Again, he achieved no mean success in a far different line, as a writer of fugitive verse, which he himself collected into a small volume, now unhappily out of print. Finally, after his death, a number of stray Essays were rescued from oblivion in the back numbers of Reviews, to which he had occasionally contributed, and issued in book-form. We may deplore that there is not more, but certainly we are the richer by what there is, for it gives us (to borrow the words of Wilfrid Ward)

PREFACE

“ the picture of the great theologian, the true Christian poet, the great literary artist, whom we have lost.”

After an illness of several years' duration which, crippling him physically, reduced him to a “ wretched derelict ” compared with what he once was, and of which the monotony was illuminated by flashes of his keen insight into men and things, and enlivened by occasional gleams of his quaint humour, he died on October 7th, 1907 ; and now at Rednal, in the peaceful graveyard of the Oratory, he lies in death at the foot of him at whose feet it was his privilege to sit in life.

THE ORATORY, BIRMINGHAM.

Feast of the Assumption, 1920.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SERMONS FOR THE ECCLESIASTICAL YEAR

A.—ADVENT TO SEPTUAGESIMA

	PAGE
1. FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT	
THE THOUGHT OF DEATH	3
2. SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT	
ON FAITH	5
3. THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT	
THE OPENING OF THE BOOKS	7
4. FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT	
ON CONSCIENCE	11
5. CHRISTMAS DAY	
THE BABE OF BETHLEHEM	15
6. SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF CHRISTMAS	
CHRISTIAN CHARITY	20
7. NEW YEAR'S DAY	
THE CIRCUMCISION	24

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
8. THE EPIPHANY	
ON HEAVEN	27
9. SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF EPIPHANY	
THE FINDING IN THE TEMPLE	31
10. SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE	34
11. THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY CLEANSING FROM SIN	37
12. FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY COMFORT IN TRIBULATION	39
13. FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY THE JUDGMENT OF CHARITY	42
14. SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY THE VOICE OF GOD	46

B.—SEPTUAGESIMA TO EASTER

1. SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY	
THE WORK OF LIFE	55
2. SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY	
ON SELF-DENIAL	58
3. QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY	
THE LOVE OF GOD	62
4. ASH WEDNESDAY	
THE WORK OF LENT	66
5. FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT	
THE HEART OF UNBELIEF	69
6. SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT	
THE THOUGHT OF HEAVEN	77

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
7. THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT	
THE OCCASIONS OF SIN . . .	82
8. FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT	
THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD . .	87
9. PASSION SUNDAY	
THE SACRED PASSION	94
10. PALM SUNDAY	
OUR LORD A WITNESS TO THE TRUTH . .	96
11. GOOD FRIDAY	
THE SEVEN WORDS ON THE CROSS (1) . .	100
THE SEVEN WORDS ON THE CROSS (2) . .	106
C.—EASTER TO PENTECOST	
1. EASTER SUNDAY	
THE ANGELS ON THE FIRST EASTER DAY .	121
2. LOW SUNDAY	
THE DECAY OF FAITH	126
3. SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER	
THE TRANSFORMATION OF DEATH . .	132
4. THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER	
THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY . .	139
5. FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER	
THE PASSAGE OF TIME	143
6. FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER	
THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE . . .	147
7. THE ASCENSION	
FOLLOWING CHRIST	151
8. SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF THE ASCENSION	
THE RISEN LIFE	154

TABLE OF CONTENTS

D.—PENTECOST TO ADVENT

	PAGE
1. WHIT SUNDAY	
THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT . . .	161
2. TRINITY SUNDAY	
THE INDWELLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT . . .	166
3. SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST	
THE GREAT SUPPER	170
4. THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST	
THE GOOD SHEPHERD	174
5. FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST	
(A) THE SPIRIT OF GRATITUDE	178
(B) FIDELITY TO GRACE	181
6. FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST	
THE CHRISTIAN STANDARD	185
7. SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST	
THE MULTITUDE OF BELIEVERS	190
8. SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST	
FALSE PROPHETS	194
9. EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST	
ON ALMSGIVING	197
10. NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST	
OUR LORD WEeping OVER JERUSALEM	200
11. TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST	
THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN	203
12. ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST	
ON HEARING THE WORD OF GOD	207
13. TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST	
OUR CHRISTIAN ADVANTAGES	217

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
14. THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST	
THE TALENT IN A NAPKIN	224
15. FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST	<i>Trin 14</i>
ON TEMPTATION	230
16. FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST	<i>Trin 16</i>
OUR LORD AT THE GATE OF NAIM	233
17. SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST	<i>Trin 17</i>
HUMILITY	235
18. SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST	<i>Trin 17</i>
THE COMMANDMENT OF LOVE	239
19. EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST	<i>Trin 19</i>
THE HEALING OF THE PARALYTIC	243
20. NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST	<i>Trin 20</i>
THE MARRIAGE OF THE KING'S SON	247
21. TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST	<i>Trin 21</i>
THE SHADOW OF DEATH	253
22. TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST	<i>Trin 22</i>
THE ARMOUR OF GOD	258
23. TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST	<i>Trin 23</i>
THE WORK OF CHRIST IN THE SOUL	263

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
24. TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST	
THE SIN OF SCANDAL	267
25. TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST	
THE SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL	271

SERMONS FOR
THE ECCLESIASTICAL YEAR

A.—ADVENT TO SEPTUAGESIMA

I. FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

THE THOUGHT OF DEATH

"Fear ye the Lord and give Him honour, for the hour of His judgment is at hand."—*Apoc.* xiv. 7.

THE expectation of the early Church. The promise of the sky that had received our Lord—the promise of persecution and trouble as signs of His coming. St Leo (fifth century), St Gregory (sixth century)—the former, "it cannot be doubted that it is nigh"; the latter marvelling that we cannot wean ourselves from a failing world, whereas the early saints had the courage to withdraw from a world in its prime.

The language of heaven—"a little while"—as contrasted with eternity; and the troubles which were so naturally taken as signs; *we* might be so deceived under similar circumstances, if this country were exposed to the fate of Rome.

It was the rhetoric, the poetry of life, that their Master's triumph was to be soon. The prose, into which it was gradually translated, was that their own individual death was so soon to bring them to Him.

The thought of death ought not to be altogether an unhappy one. To His disciples Christ says of the signs of His coming: "When these begin,

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

look up and lift up your heads, for your redemption is at hand." We may be tempted to consider this solemn Advent denunciation, the warning that the judge is at the gate, as a pretence; year after year it recurs, and instead of being introduced before the dread tribunal, we find ourselves in the stable where the Babe lies wrapped in swaddling clothes.

Yet even thus He is a judge, convicting us of pride and sensuality by His humility and poverty. But, though a reproach, it is not a condemnation; all through life it has been the same. His judgment is denounced upon us from the pulpit, but in the Sacraments we find a refuge in His loving arms. We have one way of escape, from God to God . . . and this has been hitherto the history of our life; but it cannot go on for ever. Death means either that we are for ever in His arms, or for ever excluded from them.

Prepare to meet His coming; fear Him the more that He does so much to turn your fear into love. God is indeed love, but precisely because He is love He can afford to wait, but you can not; every breath you draw in alienation from Him increases your responsibility. That judgment is deferred, that the judge seems so removed from any exercise of judgment is no advantage, unless you take effectual action. It is all so easy, had you but a heart for it. You have only a little while; He has said it, Whose word cannot pass away.

2. SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

ON FAITH

“Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope and in the power of the Holy Ghost.”—*Rom.* xv. 13.

WE need this blessing of the Apostle in this time of falling away, when men find not joy and peace in believing, but rather seek for these in the abandonment of all belief.

The atmosphere of the world most hostile to faith. Its characteristic, more perhaps than ever before, a depreciation of the supernatural. (Socrates contrasted with the typical modern thinker in this respect.)

What is Faith? The character of its argument. Our belief in God analogous to our belief in one another so far as its natural basis goes; so far as it is regarded as an act of man.

The child's belief in its mother's love, of which it has had a continuous experience, or a husband's in his wife's fidelity, is grounded upon something less than a demonstration, and yet may lack nothing of perfection, although purely natural. Divine Faith recognises God in external nature, in the voice of conscience, in the history of mankind, and especially in the history of the Church, although it is possible for a man, who chooses to harden his heart, to recognise God in

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

none of these things. God does not choose to make the evidence of the truth, of the objects of faith, so clear as to make unbelief impossible; all He does is to make the duty of believing clear to those who are single of heart; and then by the supernatural act of grace in which He unites Himself with the heart and mind of the believer who cries earnestly: "Lord, I believe, help Thou my unbelief," He gives a certainty and a perfection to the believer's grasp of truth which surpasses that of any other kind of knowledge.

We have compared our belief in God to our belief in our friends. Do we not sometimes find a madness which takes the form of suspicion?—the victim's best friends, every bit of food that is brought to the poor sick man is poisoned, all are in conspiracy for his destruction. Argument is useless, nay, the absurdity of his suspicions do not admit of demonstration—medicine, dieting, change of scene and circumstances may do much. So is it for the most part with the infidel, with the man whose faith is failing; what he lacks is prayer, self-examination, purification of heart; for it is the pure of heart that see God.

Faith is not lost by mortal sin through God's special mercy. A clue is left in our hands by which we may retrace our steps, but all sin has a tendency to weaken faith, especially in our day when there are so many rocks upon which our faith may be shipwrecked.

What it is for a Catholic to lose the Faith. Iconoclasm—an instinct with an apostate—a hideous desolation. The lesson we should learn from others' defection.

3. THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

THE OPENING OF THE BOOKS

“And I saw a great white throne, and one sitting upon it, from whose face the earth and heaven fled away, and there was no place found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing in the presence of the throne, and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged by those things which were written in the books according to their works.”—*Apoc.* xx. 11, 12.

WE are always judging one another; every man's mind is a little tribunal at which he sits in judgment. It is the first exercise of reason to class things and persons under different heads, according as they possess such or such qualities. (Adam's naming the brutes, which were passed in review before him, to see what he would call them.)

We cannot help judging one another in some measure. The warning in Scripture against judging is a warning against excess, rashness, thinking of our neighbour's faults rather than of our own, forgetting the necessary fallibility of human judgment.

We judge and are judged—the world is full of judgments of approval and condemnation, most bewildering in their variety, formed upon contradictory principles, judgments of individuals and sects

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

and schools and nationalities, judgments formed upon common sense and upon common ignorance, on men's sense of justice, on men's idea of success. Power of the world's judgment for good or evil—on the whole for evil.

In this world there is scarcely any universal judgment either of approval or of condemnation on any person or cause. There are almost always some dissentients. The condemned man has something to say for himself; over the most splendid triumph there will be some to shake their heads; none a hero to his valet.

And after all these judgments there will come *the* judgment, the judgment of God, anticipated in part here and there by man's judgment, sometimes by the judgment of the majority, sometimes by that of the minority, sometimes by that of the solitary individual against the world, but in its integrity new and strange and overwhelming.

A great white throne, and one sitting thereon before whose face the earth and heaven shall flee away, and no place more be found for them; and it will be so new and strange because books will be opened which have never been opened, or at least so opened before: the book of the Law of God and the book of the Human Conscience; and then that new book which hitherto has been absolutely closed, which contains the other two in their result as regards each individual—the Book of Life, wherein are recorded the names of those who have been found faithful.

The Book of God's Law consists of two parts—what is called the Natural or Moral Law, which being founded in the law of God's own nature

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

must needs be the law of every nature which He has made—the law which is written in the heart of man; and the Positive Law which is the result of the free-will of God in dealing with His creatures, and which He reveals to them through His Church. This Book has been opened before, otherwise man could not with justice be judged by it; but, as written in man's heart, it has been obscured by sensuality and, as delivered in the Church, by infidelity, so that to the most of the world it will seem new.

The Book of each man's Conscience will be made public for the first time—not new to the individual, and yet in that pure light *how new*. The two books confronted—*Amor Dei and Amor sui*. Is there any need of a sentence? Out of thy own mouth, out of thy own heart, art thou condemned, thou wicked servant.

The judgment final, not merely because it will be God's judgment, from Whom there is no appeal, but because it will be confirmed by the judgment of the whole of rational nature—men, angels and devils. Reason when face to face with truth must witness to it. Here the fumes of an evil heart may cloud the reason; there, despite the wickedness, there will be no cloud possible.

The frightfulness of this universal condemnation—what more awful feature in a human trial can be conceived than that, while the judge is yet speaking, the death sentence should be welcomed by the applause of the crowds without? The condemnation of each sinner will be applauded by every reason that God has made, yea by the culprit's own, which will cry out irrepressibly:

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

“ By the just judgment of God I am condemned.” Can this be conscience, this voice as of many waters?

The world loves success; we know the proverb “ nothing succeeds like success.” The winners in that last great conflict, the receivers of the eternal prize, will alone have succeeded; all others, whatever else they may have won, will have lost. The world’s worship of success then only will be legitimate, for then for the first time success and the deserving to succeed will needs go together. Here, on the contrary, everyone who deserves the name of an honest man must sometimes side with the defeated party, nay, more often than not, for virtue and right do not win many battles here. Indeed the wicked are so used to succeed that, seeing the success of the good, “ they shall be troubled with terrible fear, and shall be amazed at the suddenness of their unexpected salvation.” (Wisdom v. 2.) What does it matter to us how it fares with us in this life, if only we are on the winning side at the last?

Let us say with the Apostle (1 Cor. iv. 3) “ But to me it is a very small thing to be judged by you, or by man’s day . . . but he that judgeth me is the Lord.”

4. FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

ON CONSCIENCE

“ Make straight the way of the Lord.”—*St John* i. 23.

THE way of the Lord—our consciences; a false conscience is the way of the Lord which has been perverted, and which we must make straight.

What is conscience? It is the application which each one makes to himself of the law of God. It is a sort of reflection in the mind of man of the law of God, written in invisible ink, which is brought out in different degrees by self-discipline and by care.

This reflection more or less perfect according to the nature of the surface upon which it is reflected. *We* have the preparation of the surface.

The law of God is in itself, of course, absolutely perfect; the law of God is immaculate, says the Psalmist (Ps. cxviii), but as reflected in the heart of man, as applied by the individual to the different circumstances of his state, it admits of all the imperfections of the character of the individual.

True, even in the heart of man, in its depth, there is an inevitably true reflection of a certain portion of God's law, the general principles of right and wrong; but this is in its application liable to distortion.

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

Everybody in some way or other, except when acting in a fury of passion, forms to himself a conscience, a tribunal, which says you may do this or need not do it, even when no other reason is assigned than that you cannot help it. Indeed it is a religious necessity that we should do this; as the Apostle says, all that is not according to faith, i.e., conscience, is a sin.

A false conscience easy to form.

1. In accordance with passion. Our desires ought to be made to conform to our conscience, not the reverse; as things are, that is good which we desire, or if not good, at least permissible, at least excusable. The wicked man said in his *heart*—he did not make a boast of it with his lips merely, he made a sort of conscience of it, “There is no God”; neither was it his reason that dictated it, it was his heart, his desires.

Detailed description of the action of passion upon the mind as to occasions of sin, etc. Subtle arguments we need not. The will is not certain, perhaps not free, after a certain point.

Contrast arguments excusing past sin with those excusing future occasions.

2. In accordance with interest. Proved by our extraordinary clear-sightedness and severity as regards the moral obligations of others as contrasted with our easiness when the case is our own.

Strict speculation and lax practice—we take advantage of the different lax practices belonging to our condition of life. A barrier to fend off the action of precepts which are of universal obligation.

The tradesman cheats because it is the way of

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

trade. Young men go into doubtful company, and take part in much that is improper, and make a sort of conscience to themselves to the effect that they cannot help it, that it belongs to their class or to their time of life.

Dangerousness of this false conscience.

“ See that the light that is in thee be not darkness.” (Luke xi. 35.) Let your works be fruits of light (Ephes. vi.). If the light within thee be darkness how great shall be the darkness (Mt. vi. 23).

A false conscience caused the Jews to crucify our Lord. They would not enter the court of Pilate lest they should be defiled. “ A great and spacious sea, therein are creeping things innumerable ” (Ps. ciii.). It gives hardihood and peacefulness to sin. St Bernard describes four kinds of conscience: 1. The good and peaceful (Heaven). 2. The good and troubled (Purgatory). 3. The bad and troubled (hell with a ray of hope). 4. The bad and peaceful (hopeless hell). A sound conscience which takes sides with God against him is the sinner’s best hope. (St Augustine’s conversion.)

The prophet Isaias, when speaking in the person of the avenging justice of God, cries out: “ Blind is the heart of this people ”; it is the climax of vengeance. Send me anything rather than this blindness. We cannot urge it as an excuse. If we could, why did David ask that his ignorances might be forgotten? Because there is always a basis of true conscience sufficient to confound the artificial superstructure we have raised—because so many without our light have seen to do well,

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

Pagans, for instance, Protestants. We have seen so clearly for others, and before sin blinded us we saw so clearly for ourselves.

It is a narrow way that leads unto life, and unfortunately will not widen in correspondence with the widening of our conscience.

5. CHRISTMAS DAY

THE BABE OF BETHLEHEM

“ And He said Who was sitting upon the throne, Behold I make all things new.”—*Apoc.* xxi. 5.

THERE is an attraction in what is new, landscapes that we have not seen before, new music, books, thoughts, faces; not to have novelty in some shape or other, to be condemned to tread the same old paths, to hear the same things said over and over again, in the same tone, is an exceeding weariness. Hence it is that men are drawn to wander over the earth, to climb mountains, to burst the icy barriers that girdle many a lonely sea. And again at this season in which there are so many new publications of one kind and another, everything in the way of extravagance and folly is forgiven the man who knows how to say some new thing, or at least to say it after some new fashion.

And yet with all this pursuit of novelty, this tremendous effort to attain to something new, this vast demand which should somehow create a corresponding supply, the world's complaint is that there is nothing new under the sun, that it is all flat, dull, stale, and unprofitable, a current of

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

conventionalities flecked here and there with a horror, or a folly, or a piece of good luck, itself of a conventional type.

I have said that we have a natural craving for novelty, and yet, with the inconsistency which appertains to our nature, we also shrink from it, and cling to old ways and familiar objects, even whilst we complain of them. This is, of course, peculiarly the case with persons as they grow old. Even when most subject to unrest, they have by the mere continuity of living woven about themselves habits which have become a second nature, attaching them to the ordinary circumstances of their lives, and imposing an emphasised air of strangeness upon all to which they are not used. Then again they have lost so much that was dear and familiar to them, that with them hope has become to a great extent a memory, and memory a hope. The novelty they still seek has become less the novelty of acquisition than the novelty of recovery. Thus they finish their journey, as it would seem, with reverted faces.

So it comes to pass that for many of us the words of Him that was sitting upon the throne, at first hearing, combine a thrill of dread with their exultation, not so I think when we have entered into the fullness of their meaning.

“ And He said to me, I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.” After all, both cravings are to be gratified, the craving for what is new, and the craving for the old and the familiar. For the old things are to be made new. The new heaven and the new earth are the old heavens and the old earth, renewed, purified with

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

a baptism of fire. Who can suppose that this earth with all its holy places, Bethlehem and Calvary, the spots where angels have alighted and saints have dwelt, and the Lord of angels and saints has inhabited under the sacramental species, will literally be destroyed? that the wise householder, who produces from his treasury things new and old, will consent to cast away a reliquary so rare, a shrine so precious, so sacred, as this earth of ours?

First, then, if we will, we shall see God, Who indeed has been with us from the first, the very source of our light of knowledge and of our light of love, the sun of the soul, and yet hitherto to so large an extent an unknown God. And then, in the light of His countenance, all beautiful and gracious things that we have loved will be invested with a fresh beauty, so that they shall be at once new and familiar. We shall understand the mysteries of form and colour, of rhythm and harmony, and knowing them in God or under the light of God, we shall exclaim: "Behold Thou hast made all things new," even while recognising that they are what we have loved and marvelled at all our lives. The dawn and the sunset, the starry heavens, a mother's love, the heroism of the saints, will unfold themselves to our recognition, as the old truth and beauty has been made new. These things shall be new in their purification from all taint of sin, of melancholy, of regret, for we shall regard them with eyes cleansed from all impurity, and in the one just and perfect light.

And now it is precisely to this renewal of life and youth, which is at once a progress and a

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

return, that the Feast of Christmas invites us: "Unless ye become as little children ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

How often a child's influence in a family is a great Godsend! Its innocence is contagious; those who are in its company must for shame's sake pretend to be good if they are not, and at least wish to be good, and in that degree really are what they pretend.

And now the Eternal Wisdom, Who made us, and knows us and our shortcomings as we can never know ourselves or them, comes to us as a little child, with a child's frank caress, as though He knows nothing but good of us; a child's little hand is thrust into ours, and we are bidden come and be His guest, and lead an innocent life—no more envy, or hatred, or lust, or pride. And if we plead our age and our long adverse habits, He promises that, if we will but live with Him Who though the ancient of days is eternally young, our youth shall be renewed like the eagle's, and that though our sins be as scarlet yet they shall be as white as wool, "for behold I make all things new." Here is something new that we should be innocent. What more delightfully new than the sensation of Naaman the Syrian when, after his seventh immersion in the Jordan, the harsh distorted skin of his leprosy fell away, and his flesh became as the flesh of a little child. O my brethren, at this season even the most austere among us let our children have their way with us! Have we the heart to refuse Him, the child that is born to us, the son that is given us, Whose government is upon his shoulder, and Whose

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, God, Mighty, the Prince of Peace?

And then we shall find, even the worst of us, if we but accept His invitation, that we shall realise the truth of the promise: "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard with the kid, and the calf and the lion and the kid shall dwell together, and a little child shall lead them." (Is. xi. 6.)

6. SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF CHRISTMAS

CHRISTIAN CHARITY

“Amen, I say to you unless you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.”—*St Matt.* xviii. 3.

THIS is the great lesson of the Incarnation: Our Lord became a little child in order to set us an example of humility, simplicity, and obedience. The eternal wisdom of the Father emptied Himself, to use the expression of the Apostle, and clothed Himself in the form of human ignorance and human weakness. (*Phil.* ii. 7.)

We must be taught of God; the darkness of our human ignorance no human light can dispel; the wounds of our heart only the Divine Physician can heal, and we must follow His prescription, whether we understand it or not. And He being God, and this world not heaven, we cannot fully understand; therefore we must be little children.

Christ has come that we may have life, and may have it more abundantly. Christ has come that we may have light. And the life was the light of man, for He has come, as holy Zachary sings, “to give the knowledge of salvation to his people.” He had spoken to the world so often by His

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

messengers, the prophets, but now He speaks Himself in the words of Isaias (ii. 6), "Lo, I myself who am speaking am here," and of St John, "the only begotten who is in the bosom of the Father himself has told it." And He has the art of speaking, of making Himself one with those to whom He speaks.

He spoke to the world by the law and the prophets, but so far as raising up to life poor human nature that lay dead, it was all without effect, even as in that relation in the Fourth Book of Kings, iv. The child of promise had died, and when God's prophet is told of it, he sends his servant with his staff, who lays it upon the face of the child, but there is neither sound nor movement, and he comes back and reports to his master that the child has not risen. Then the prophet himself enters the house, and shuts the door, and in the words of scripture: "He went up and lay upon the child; and he put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands; and he bowed himself upon him, and the child's flesh grew warm. Then he returned and walked in the house, once to and fro; and he went up, and lay upon him, and the child gaped seven times, and opened his eyes."

The law that could not give life is represented by the staff, and thus St Augustine applies the action of the prophet: "He came, the Son of God, the great One to the little one, the Saviour to him who needed salvation. . . . He took upon Himself those baby limbs, as it were annihilating Himself, He took the form of a servant. Becoming little, He adapted Himself to the little one

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

that He might make the body of our humility fashioned according to the body of His glory—not only the form of the child in the stable, but of the sinner upon the cross.”

He comes to teach us the lesson of man’s abasement and of man’s dignity—fallen in Adam, restored and raised in Christ.

Those who reject the doctrine of the Incarnation are fast losing all idea of humility and all sense of dignity. They are their own masters, they will not serve, they are grown men forsooth, not little children. Yet, on the other side, in their view man is only an improved beast. A miracle, an interruption in the order of nature for the sake of a fraction, of the human fraction, of that nature is inconceivable. With the Christian, the believer in the Incarnation, man is more than the whole material creation, for God became man. Besides this, the Incarnation supplies us with a bond and motive, nay, necessity, of love for our fellow-men. Man was made in the image and likeness of God, but that likeness was in the soul; it was not visible to the bodily eye. But now God has put on the likeness of man, and so in a true sense every man to the Christian becomes the likeness of God-made-man. Men must forgive their enemies, for every man was an image of the crucified One to Whom the world owed its forgiveness. Sin became a sort of sacrilege in that it was a desecration of the image of Christ in our person or in our neighbour’s.

Look how slightly the world esteemed human life and human honour. When our Lord came, thousands of slaves were made to fight one another

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

and wild beasts in the amphitheatres; but now look at the sublime charity of Christian times of which we are the inheritors, and how a Christian tradition has produced our hospitals and various other institutions of which Paganism knew nothing.

We owe our mercifulness, the best part of our civilisation, to our real belief in the Incarnation. There is reason to fear lest ceasing to be Christians we become barbarians.

Love of men contrasted with worship of mankind. Our Lord came to conquer the world, and the two great arms He used were detachment and love. These have always been the arms used by the saints, and in proportion as we are possessed of these will be our efficaciousness for good in the world. He comes to win to Himself each one of us. When Saul was pursuing David to take his life, David took refuge in a cave, and Saul, entering in by himself, fell asleep; David spared his life, and spoke to him out of the darkness, and Saul knew what David had done for him, and his hard heart was touched, and he cried out: "Is that thy voice, David, my son?" "And Saul lifted up his voice, and wept. Thou hast given me good things, and I have rendered to thee evil; now I know most certainly that thou wilt reign; take not away my name from the house of my father." (1 Kings xxiv.)

7. NEW YEAR'S DAY

THE CIRCUMCISION

"After eight days were accomplished, that the Child should be circumcised, His name was called Jesus."

—*St Luke* ii. 21.

THE object of the circumcision:—

1. To show the reality of our Lord's assumption of our human flesh. The difficulty of the doctrine of the Incarnation.

2. To show the merit and necessity of *obedience*.

3. To show that He was representing the person of the sinner.

The circumcision the prelude of the Cross. The initiation of the Precious Blood. Circumcision the remedy and so the sign of sin; shame should be for the sin, not for the remedy; Christ and we contrasted in this respect.

Spiritual circumcision. Circumcision or mortification of the heart and understanding—by faith. (St Stephen, Acts vii. 51.)

Circumcision of the ears—uncircumcised ears. "There shall be a time when they will not endure sound doctrine; but, according to their own desires, they will heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears." (2 Tim. iv. 3.)

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

Uncircumcised lips: "He who offends not in word, the same is a perfect man." (St James iii. 2.)

The Holy Name Jesus is the exaltation after the humiliation of the circumcision—a melody in the ears, honey in the mouth, joy in the heart, a light to the feet, food, and medicine, and anointing.

Miracles wrought in that name, sufferings undergone in that name, summarise the history of the early Church. A new name, the first time that the name was attached to one in whom the idea was completely realised; others before had borne it as types, e.g., Josue, who led the Israelites into the promised land. Let it be a new name to us in its fullness, the beginning of a new life.

The New Year, and all that it may contain for us. The world's conception of the New Year as a child that knows not what is coming to it. Our Child of the New Year, ever young indeed with the vigour of eternal youth as contrasted with our decay, yet the ancient of days, knowing no shadow of change, the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, knowing all things, holding the issue of all things in the hollow of His hand.

Who knows for what functions in our regard the Holy Name will be required this year, to guard against what temptations, to temper what exaltation, to assuage what grief? We who visit the sick and dying, whether priests or laity, commend this name as containing all which St Bernard says it is to the afflicted, and we do so as honestly as we should give water to lips parched with thirst. But in our own case shall we find

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

such ready faith, such almost joyful confidence? Who knows but this year we may need practically to learn our own lessons?

Be it so, yet in the Mighty Name and confiding in the virtue of the Precious Blood which Christ began to shed for us on this day, we will accept whatever the New Year may have in store for us, though it take the form of the punishment our sins have so well deserved. Yet *misericordias Domini in æternum cantabo*, I will for ever sing the mercies of the Lord, for I will account all as mercy that brings me nearer to Him.

8. THE EPIPHANY

ON HEAVEN

“ And there came one of the seven angels . . . and spoke with me saying : Come and I will show thee the bride, the wife of the Lamb. And he took me up in spirit to a great and high mountain, and he shewed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of Heaven from God, having the glory of God, and the light thereof was like to a precious stone, as to the jasper-stone, even as crystal.”—*Apoc.* xxi. 9-11.

It is most important and necessary that we should meditate sometimes upon heaven. We are afraid of it, lest we should degrade a subject which we can never do justice to. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, what God has prepared for those that love Him. But for all that, conceive it, picture it, dwell upon it we must, for we require it as the food and support of our hope; we are heirs of the kingdom of heaven, and must have confidence that, through Christ's mercy, we shall one day enjoy that inheritance.

When Abraham had gone out unto a strange land, leaving his country and his father's house at God's bidding, the Lord said to him: “ Lift up thine eyes, and look from the place wherein thou now art to the north, and to the south, to the east,

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

and to the west; all the land which thou seest I will give to thee and to thy seed for ever." (Gen. xiii. 14.) So God speaks to us, and bids us lift our spiritual eyes from the place in which we now are, and fix them upon that blessed country which assuredly, if we are faithful, shall one day be ours.

1. And now this heavenly country, this New Jerusalem, what is it like? (Apoc. xxi.) Let us think of all we have seen of this beautiful world, of the works of nature, and the works of man, and then recollect that this world which God has so adorned is a land of exile, a prison house, an abode of sin; that heaven is God's own country, the palace of the great King, the home of those that love Him.

2. The society of the Saints, all members one of the other, all held together by the Holy Spirit, who is the soul of that body. Perfect charity, the joy of each, is the joy of all. Each, the least, adds something to the perfection of heaven, like subordinate instruments in a well-ordered concert, each has his place which is appreciated by all. The anguish that we have not done better and gained a higher place has helped to make our Purgatory, but now it is lost in the perfect joy of forming an integral part in that perfect body of which Christ is the head. There is no envy, no sense of strangeness or unfitness; all are kings and sons of the Most High, all see God face to face, and so, although differing immensely in merit and dignity, all are given a kind of equality unknown elsewhere. Think of the joy of entering that kingdom, though the least in it. There are none there who will not be your friends, who will not

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

welcome you, to whom your coming will not be a joy, who will not make much of you, virgins and martyrs, doctors and apostles. Lift up your eyes higher still, beyond the Cherubim and Seraphim, to where Mary sits enthroned; are you afraid? in heaven there is no fear. Has she ceased to be your mother, now you are in heaven, now you are at home? Is not the mother of sinners mother too of the elect? Oh, how we shall all rejoice in her joy, leaning upon her Beloved, no longer worshipping in the wretched stable, or weeping at the foot of the Cross, but having indeed found Him Whom her soul sought, never more to lose Him. And again higher, on the right hand of the Father, our Blessed Lord in His sacred humanity; who can tell the joy which purified humanity must feel at seeing itself elevated to the throne of God? Men will then look upon God, and see that He has indeed become their brother; it will not be as at Bethlehem when the humanity alone was visible, and the Godhead was the object of faith; in heaven both the Godhead and the humanity will be seen. If He took the lost sheep upon His shoulder, shall we be less near and dear to Him in heaven, safe in the one fold of the one Shepherd? No assuredly, the least in this kingdom of heaven will be nearer the Sacred Heart than was St John when he leant upon the breast of Christ.

3. Our whole being shall rejoice in God our Saviour. Our body, our five senses, none of the five strings of the instrument will be broken. They will be in accord as never before.

4. All this for ever. The canker in all temporal pleasure. We cannot eat our cake and have it

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

(*simile of children*), we cannot live our life and have it yet to live, the more we *enjoy* the less we are capable of *enjoyment*. We describe the joy we know not by the absence of griefs we know—the peace of heaven's joy lying in its stability. The triumph of the Church, the heavenly Jerusalem no longer crucified by its enemies, by its wicked children, and mocked at as our Lord was; let her now come down from the cross and we will believe her; her note of sanctity no longer confined to the few, but clothing her from head to foot so that there is indeed no spot or wrinkle on the bride, the wife of the Lamb.

Heaven is a subject for Christmas time, for at this holy season the heavens are opened; heaven comes down upon earth, showing the Divine Bridegroom in the form of a little child come to speak to His spouse, to lead her through the wilderness of this life, through the poverty of Bethlehem and the anguish of Calvary even to the mountain of God, where she will reign with her Spouse for ever.

Let us from the bottom of our hearts put up that petition from the Litany of the Saints: "that Thou wouldst lift up our minds to heavenly desires, we beseech Thee hear us."

9. SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF EPIPHANY

THE FINDING IN THE TEMPLE

“And His mother said to Him: Son, why hast Thou done so to us? behold Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing.”—*St Luke ii. 48.*

WHY did this strange event happen?

1. For the exercise of the virtue of our Lady and St Joseph; to prepare the former for the grievous separation after the thirty years.

2. For His further manifestation of His mission. His Father's work. Redemption. Creation.

3. To impress on us the lesson of the thirty years. The faith in God made man involved in our Lady's maternal commands. The faith in the union of the two natures in one person gradually developed in the Church. (Christ in the Blessed Eucharist at the priest's command.)

4. As Christ represented the sinner in His circumcision, so do His holy Mother and St Joseph in this scene. The loss of Christ not their fault. How it was they did not miss Him at once.

The loss of Christ. He never forsakes one who is in a state of grace, unless He is first forsaken. (Council of Trent.) They had left Him in Jerusalem. Loss by mortal sin—partial or initial loss by neglect of grace, etc.

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

Our great duty to seek Christ till we find Him, and to lose Him no more. All must seek Christ—the foolish virgins did so indeed, but too late. Now is the acceptable time, now is the day of salvation. We should seek at once, like the woman who had lost the groat, and lit her candle, exercised her faith. We must seek Him sorrowing.

What the loss of Him is—it is the loss of all, little as we realise it. What our sorrow should be—not the sorrow that leads to death. “Seek ye the Lord and be ye strengthened, seek God, and thy soul shall live.” Holy souls, seek ye your spouse; sinful souls, seek ye your physician. Happy we if, on the experience of years, we can say: “It is good for me to cleave unto God.”

Our indifference under this loss contrasted with our anxiety under others, e.g., health, a child, a jewel. We must seek Him where we did not lose Him, away from the occasions of sin, in solitude, in church.

Let us pray with St Bernard that He would ever bind us to Him, not with the cords of His promises merely, or with the nails of the terrors of His judgment, but with that uniting virtue which operates alone under the fire of charity.

And now let us fix our eyes upon the close of that scene which has so often formed the subject of our meditation in the last joyful mystery of the Rosary. Our Lord had been astonishing the doctors by the wisdom of His questions and replies. It seems like the beginning of a great manifestation, and of a recognition of His mission, and His words to His mother are in the same

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

key: "Didst thou not know that I must be about my Father's business?" And then we see Him, without further conversation with those whose marvel He had been exciting, quietly putting His hand into His mother's, and going home! "A child," would they exclaim, "an astonishing child surely," but still a mere child in his childish inconsequence; and then follow eighteen years more of quiet routine in the Holy House, in Joseph's workshop, achieving nothing, as the world would reckon, of that which He had come to do. But He had come to teach the world how to live, as well as how to die, to teach the philosophy of childlike patience and submission to the Divine will, in sharp contrast with the impatient energy of passion and ambition, which marks the world's heroes, and in which the devil so continually finds his advantage. There was a Roman general ever gratefully held in remembrance by his countrymen as Fabius *qui cunctando restituit rem*, who, by delaying, holding back, restored the state and baffled the invader. So, in the thirty years, our Lord teaches that the truest preparation for victory is patient waiting upon Providence, and performing meanwhile the little duties of daily life; in these shall we find His company as surely and certainly for a longer time, for life is made up rather of little matters than of great, as in any brilliant achievement to which we may be called.

Yes, this is what we want, His company in time and in eternity; Lord, whither goest Thou? It matters not, so we may be with Thee, but whither Thou goest not, neither will we go.

10. SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

“ And the wine failing, the mother of Jesus saith to Him : They have no wine.”—*St John* ii. 3.

THE marriage at which Jesus and His mother and His disciples are guests is a type of Christian marriage.

Marriage, raised by Christ to the dignity of a Sacrament, a figure of the hypostatic union, and of the union of Christ with His Church.

Duty of prudence as a condition for Christ's presence.

A partnership in a common stock of happiness, so far as this world goes, and one not of limited liability; and also affecting, as no other earthly circumstance can, the prospect of happiness in the life to come.

Some practical hints, need of a commentary on the character of the woman chosen, or the man accepted. The approval of parents, limitations. Other conditions for the presence of Christ—union in the faith, that both should be in a state of grace. The invitation should be given by both, if it is to be accepted. Tertullian says: “ One flesh, one spirit, together they pray, together they

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

fast, teaching one another, exhorting one another, both together in the Church of God, both together at God's banquet. Neither aggrieves the other. The sick are freely visited, the needy are supported, almsgiving without pressing, sacrifices without hesitation, daily industry without hindrance. This when Christ sees and hears, He rejoices: upon these He bestows His peace: where are these twain, there He is; and where He is, there the evil one is not."

But when all the conditions have been fulfilled, when Jesus and His mother and His disciples have blessed the marriage by their presence, in married life, as in every other form of human life, there are moments when the wine fails.

The wine of happiness—its mysterious character. Sin, or at least a defective adherence to the will of God, is at the bottom of most unhappiness, and the wine of earthly pleasure, however innocent of its nature, tends to fail, for it cannot satisfy the heart of man.

Then we require consolation, and we can no more minister it to ourselves than a poor baby that is left crying on the floor. Then it will be well for us that our mother—help of Christians, comforter of the afflicted—without waiting to be asked, should take our part, and say to her Son: "*Vinum non habent*"—"they have no wine." "What is it to me and to thee, mine hour is not yet come." I will not stay to comment on this passage, which represents the struggle of prayer, where God withholds Himself in order to be entreated, like Jacob wrestling with the Angel.

The victory instantaneous. At once she turns

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

to the waiters, and says: "Whatsoever he shall say to you, do ye." Christ's words continuous.

The six waterpots:—

1. Contrition. 2. Confession. 3. Almsgiving.
4. Forgiveness of injuries. 5. Bodily mortification.
6. Obedience—and from these, filled to the brim,
flows the wine of happiness.

The best wine kept till last. *Christus Sponsus Animæ*. (The marriage supper of the Lamb. Apoc. xix.)

11. THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

CLEANSING FROM SIN

“And behold a leper came and adored Him, saying: Lord if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean. And Jesus stretching forth His hand, touched him, saying: I will, be thou made clean. And forthwith his leprosy was cleansed.”—*St Matt.* viii. 2, 3.

LEPROSY the figure of sin. The separation and casting forth from the city—the pain of loss. Its infectious character. The laborious ceremonies which represented its cure when already wrought, and where the discipline proved the cure.

The two sparrows, one sacrificed, the other let go, after being sprinkled with the blood of the slain, representing Christ's two natures in His passion. The cutting of the hair, etc., representing the cutting off occasions of sin and mortification.

There was a time when the sinner, at least the public sinner, was separated from the rest of the faithful.

The different classes of penitents: *now* no external representation of that inward separation. What that separation is—the modern system of imprisonment, solitary confinement. The beginning of all true conversion, the recognition that

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

we are sinners, and deserve to dwell apart. Confidence in God: *if Thou wilt*, Thou canst make me clean. He has answered that question on the Cross, not *volo* but *sitio*. Our cure certain if we ourselves will it. *Ars voluntatis*. Who will teach us this sublimest of all arts, to will rightly?

But how is it possible, we cry with Nicodemus? Can one being old enter his mother's womb, and be born again? It is well for the young; the child has no evil habits; it is his beauty and his glory that he may so easily be made a saint. But how can we be renewed? It is much if our joints be relieved from the pain, but can we ever run again, can we ever win the race?

O miracle of miracles! It is wonderful that the seed should expand into stalk and leaf and bud and blossom, but that the withered stamen, from which the bloom has fallen, should flower again! We are inclined to ask ourselves, as it was asked of the prophet, as he stood in the field of dry bones: "Thinkest thou that these dry bones will live?" And he answered: "Lord God, Thou knowest."

Volo, sitio—the condition lies with thee. Dost thou renounce Satan, etc.? I do. Wilt thou be baptised? I will.

"I will, be thou made clean; go show thyself to the priest, and offer thy gift to God."

Perhaps we suffer and are not stable because we neglect to offer our gift. The kind of gift. The new heart we have obtained of God should be grateful.

12. FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

COMFORT IN TRIBULATION

“ And behold a great tempest arose in the sea, so that the boat was covered with waves, but He was asleep.”

—*St Matt.* viii. 24.

THE company of Jesus in trouble. His sleep—the powers of nature, the malice of demons and of men, are left free to wreak themselves upon us.

Sometimes indeed He does not seem to sleep, and throughout the fiercest trial He makes His presence felt, as when the three holy ones (Dan. iii. 92) were cast into the furnace that was heated seven times hotter than it was wont, and the astonished King cried out: “ Behold I see *four* men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and no hurt is in them, and the appearance of the fourth is like unto the Son of God.” Then indeed we can triumph in our tribulations.

But sometimes, as in to-day's Gospel, He is asleep, but if He sleeps it is as in the Scripture: “ I sleep, but my heart waketh.”

He sleeps that we may wake Him, that we may know what it is to be without Him.

And yet we are never so near Him, He never so makes Himself one with us, as when there is a great tempest, and the boat is covered with waves.

The trials of the Church and of the Saints. Our own trials. We must not look to be excepted from this common dispensation; we suffer in good company; Christ suffers in us, though our suffer-

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

ings may be in a great measure the outcome of our own sins.

(St John Chrysostom, the deep furrow, the joy of the husbandman in the storm. The time of trouble the acceptable time, the mistake people make.) "Tribulation worketh patience, and patience trial, and trial hope." (Rom. v. 3, 4.)

"My brethren, count it all joy, when you shall fall into divers temptations, knowing that the trying of your faith worketh patience. And patience hath a perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, failing in nothing." (James i. 2, 3, 4.)

Importance of recognising the hand of God in our afflictions: "*Manus Domini tetigit me.*" (Job xix. 21.) We are sure that it is wise and kind.

Christ only *seems* to sleep: "Behold He shall neither slumber nor sleep Who keepeth Israel." Cry unto Him persistently: "Lord, save us or we perish." We must betake ourselves to our Lord and not to man. "Give unto us help in our tribulations, for vain is the help of man."

Many suffered shipwreck with St Paul, lovers of this world, who came out of their trouble naked, having lost their external goods, and with the house of their hearts empty; but the Apostle came forth, having lost nothing, for he bore safely in his heart the patrimony of the faith. (St Augustine.) Hear how he speaks of what was the climax of his troubles: "I would not have you ignorant, brethren, of our tribulation which hath befallen us in Asia, that we have ~~been~~ above measure burdened above our strength, so that it wearied us to live. But we in ourselves had the answer of death,

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

that we might not trust in ourselves, but in God, Who raiseth up the dead; Who from so great perils hath delivered and yet delivers us, in Whom we hope that he will yet again deliver us." (2 Cor. i. 8-10.)

In this spirit let us cry to Him, and He will surely rebuke the winds and the waves, and there will be a great calm, for as He saith by the mouth of the Psalmist: "I am with him in his tribulation, I will deliver him and glorify, since he hath hoped in me I will deliver him, he shall cry unto Me, and I will hear him."

Alas, what little share have we in the glorious tribulations of the friends of God; our troubles are so much of our own making.

This wretched boat, these broken oars, are very much what we have made of them; it is our own sins which encompass us with the blackness of night. Yet all this need not separate us from Him, for He has come to seek that which was lost. He is not afraid to trust Himself to worse boats than ours, if such there are, if the owners are willing. "I will look for him who will deliver me from meanness of spirit and the storm." Better for us in our water-logged boat, battered by the storms of a lifetime, if only Christ is with us, than in a trim boat such as the poet sings of, with youth at the prow and pleasure at the helm, but without that Divine companion.

A great calm, *tranquillitas magna*, we may hardly look for in this life; yet a foretaste we shall surely have, if we humbly accept the chastisement and the consolation. "Thy rod and thy staff both have comforted me." (Ps. xxiii.)

13. FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

THE JUDGMENT OF CHARITY

“Suffer both to grow until the harvest, and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers : Gather up first the cockle, and bind it into bundles to burn, but the wheat gather ye into my barn.”—*St Matt.* xiii. 30.

WE have here a characteristic of God's treatment of men—of sinners—proposed to us for our instruction. God hates sin with a necessary and everlasting hatred. God must cease to be God ere He can cease for one moment from His hostility to sin, and yet during this life He bears with the sinner. He is long-suffering, as He is called in Holy Scripture. He maketh His sun to shine upon the just and the unjust. And He is thus forbearing with the sinner both for the sinner's own sake, in order that he may have time for repentance, and also (and this is the particular reason suggested in the Gospel of to-day) that He may not by a sudden and sharp exercise of His justice afflict the good with whom the culprit may be in intimate relations—“lest gathering up the cockle you root up the wheat together with it.”

For the sake of the just, yes, but it is not merely that these may be spared the pain of seeing their friends punished, before they are sustained by the vision of the God Who is all in all. It is to satisfy a much wider need. It is to prevent the breaking up of an economy upon which the perseverance of the just depends. It is to prevent us from finding

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

an excuse in God's judgments for judging our neighbours. Ever since Adam excused himself at his wife's expense: "The woman whom Thou gavest me to be my companion gave me of the tree, and I did eat" (Gen. iii. 12), man has used to constitute himself a tribunal at which he has persistently justified himself, and judged, the most often unfavourably, his neighbour. One reason of the apparently on the whole equal treatment of the good and the bad in this life is the discouragement of man's judgment. He is to work out his salvation in fear and trembling; he is to judge not at all, lest he himself be judged.

One is apt to be vexed and wearied by the equality—God's sunshine and rain upon the just and the unjust. If it makes us in any degree suspend our judgment upon our neighbours, justice or injustice, it is a merciful dispensation for us. Of course we cannot help judging of external actions as bad or good, still we can leave, and we must leave, the ultimate judgment as to good or bad to Him Who alone seeth the heart, and our determined mortification of this passion for judging our neighbour is a condition both of reformation and of progress in virtue.

I am afraid we have hardly realised the stringency of the precept not to judge. We can understand that certain ill-conditioned spiteful judgments should be restricted. But why spirits at once so shrewd and so genial as we are should not judge, and when we cannot acquit, condemn, we do not understand. We have not understood that it is precisely this attitude of judge which the Supreme Judge has forbidden us. It must in the

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

eyes of the holy angels look supremely absurd, as it would be to see prisoners who should be in the dock, or who have but just left it, insisting upon ascending the judgment-seat. We hardly know the weed from the wheat, and in our judgment at least we are plucking up in every direction. It would be well to consider that in all probability there are many zealous hands itching to pluck us up.

I dare say there is a good deal of truth in our judgments; they are often perhaps true as far as they go, but then they are based on such fragmentary knowledge, and a lie which is half a truth is often the blackest of lies.

But grant what you will of completeness to our knowledge of our neighbours; if thereto be added a real knowledge of self, we should not have the heart to assume the judge's place. In one of the ancient religious communities in Egypt, it happened that one of the community was solemnly excommunicated for a very grievous sin. As the culprit rose after sentence had been pronounced, and went out to begin his long and severe penance outside the Church, an aged saint, the oldest and holiest there, rose and went out with him, saying: "Suffer me to go into penance with him, for I too am a sinner."

Let us have pity on our brother sinners, and have pity on ourselves. We could not take up a more degrading and mischievous amusement than that of talking scandal. I do not suppose anything very bad, still less slanderous, but simply depreciatory talk, the favourite amusement of pulling off the perhaps unduly high prices at which a neighbour

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

has been labelled by himself, and by too partial friends, and affixing what we fancy may represent his truer value. We could hardly more effectually cheapen ourselves mentally and morally, not to dwell upon the danger of serious breaches of God's law. Gossip is one of the worst instruments of education; it begins with making you shallow and conceited, and ends with discontent and hardness of heart.

No doubt at the bottom of all this eagerness to judge is a love of justice. But we must have patience till the time of the harvest, then will justice be done to our neighbour and to ourselves; the cockle shall be gathered into bundles to burn, and the wheat shall be gathered into the barn. The merciful, cleansing fire of Purgatory shall then have done its work upon the least of those irregularities and follies of which we make so much in our neighbours and so little in ourselves, and there will be no more gossip, or scandal, or grudging, for each will have only one value, the value set upon him by God.

And I ask you—who amongst men is generous enough to restore an offender as completely to his favour as God does the penitent? The receivers of man's forgiveness for the most part must wear a badge commemorative of the former offences, but God is not content to take the penitent at his own value as a hired servant, but in the merits of Christ he is given a value which is not his—he is a son, and his culpable absence is but made an occasion for a more cordial welcome.

The more we imitate God's forbearance the more surely shall we become the objects of it.

14. SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

THE VOICE OF GOD

“Therefore we also give thanks to God without ceasing : because, that when you had received of us the word of the hearing of God, you received it not as the word of men, but (as it is indeed) the word of God, Who worketh in you that have believed.”—1 *Thess.* ii. 13.

MEN'S lives may be broadly divided into the natural and the supernatural, according as they consider that all their words or thoughts are merely the offspring of their own minds and other minds like theirs, or, on the other hand, that amidst this babel of human voices which surround them from the cradle to the grave, there is, both among the thoughts of their own heart and addressing them through human lips, a voice, a word, a message, an instruction, which is verily the word of God. We can see at once what a vital difference this must make in the whole conduct of human life. If God is speaking to us anywhere or anyhow, it becomes of supreme importance that we should know what He says; compared with this, nothing else is important; other instruction may await our leisure, but let the whole earth be silent when the Lord speaketh.

The world is a ship fast driven on the rocks, and very many of the crew are simply trying to

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

distract themselves in a variety of occupations, some grave, some frivolous; but others, in deference to a voice which they insist they can hear above the howling of the wind, are making a variety of mysterious preparations which their companions regard with astonishment, as the result of utter delusion. They say they know the voice, that it is the voice of One Whom they can implicitly trust, Who can neither deceive nor be deceived, Whom the winds and the sea obey. More and more sharply is this line dividing mankind; on the one side those who simply live for the present, on the other those who speculate more or less wisely, more or less definitely and consistently, in a life to come.

Of course we, as children of the Catholic Church, believe (1) that God speaks to us in the great principles of the natural law, which He has imprinted upon our souls as part of His own image; (2) that the Eternal Word became incarnate to teach us the way of salvation, and that He perpetuated His instruction in an institution which will endure as long as the world lasts; (3) that in accordance with the harmony and the teaching both of the natural law and of the Church, in virtue of our membership in the mystic body of Christ, the Holy Spirit, who is the soul of that mystic body, informs our conscience as to what we are to do in order to carry out in detail the will of God in the conduct of our lives.

It is on this third voice or word of God that I wish to dwell, but it will be well briefly to explain the other two first.

1. The Natural Law. God, in creating, could

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

not but make His creatures after His own image; being is only being in virtue of its resemblance, however faint and refracted, to Him Who is Being itself. I am who am. Where God creates a being who has the power of deliberately adjusting means to an end, of choosing, of refraining, that being must, or he would be no creation of a holy God, be given a knowledge of the difference between good and evil, an appreciation of the moral law which is a law of God's Own nature, and a consciousness of its obligation—which obligation must be embodied in, and enforced by, a positive command of God. True, this natural moral law may be partially obscured, and sometimes all but obliterated, in some of its details, but its great features always remain. The character of God's rational creature, which hell fire cannot burn out.

2. Christ, the Eternal Word, spoke to us through human lips that were God's Own; and then in the Church through the lips of frail human creatures like ourselves. But the word, to whatever extent its communication partakes of the imperfection of its vehicle, is the word of God. St Paul, in the text, enjoins that the Thessalonians received what he said to them not as the word of man, but (as it is indeed) the word of God. The extent to which non-Catholics have forgotten this part of the Christian ministry. Even Catholics do not sufficiently realise that a sermon, which is not at all original, which ministers no fresh food for thought to anyone, need not on that account be inefficacious. It is part of a great institution for conveying to us the word of God, which is no dead thing, but a living embodied grace.

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

3. We are members of the mystical body of Christ, temples of the Holy Ghost, Who speaks to us by the inspirations of His grace, Who tells us what He would have us do, not all at once, but gradually, and with increasing distinctness, in proportion as we listen to Him. As God speaks to us by the mouth of His minister, so He speaks to us in the thoughts of our own heart, using them as a medium; but even as the ray of light is dulled and broken by the obscurities of the atmosphere, so is the Divine voice affected, as far as we are concerned, by the character of our moral atmosphere. Almighty God might, of course, in dealing with us, dispense with these natural impediments; but He wishes gradually to educate us in the art of listening. We must incline our ear, we must discriminate the Divine whisper from other whispers, and gradually still other voices. "Behold I stand at the door and knock." He knocks, He does not speak. If we attend to that knock, and open to Him, then He will speak. If we wait till that knock articulates itself into words, we shall wait until death breaks down the door. "They shall be all taught of God." The Holy Spirit is our teacher. He writes His word in our hearts, but the materials on which He writes, if I may so speak, are in a great measure of our own making, and there is so much trouble and confusion in our hearts that we require an interpreter to help us to decipher the writing. Of course there is the authoritative teaching of Holy Church, the ascertained word of the Holy Spirit, in perfect accordance with which, of course, all other teaching of the Holy Spirit must be; but we require something more, and here lies

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

the use of a spiritual director. He does not put himself in the place of the Holy Spirit in our regard, but he assists us to read, and understand, and practise, what the Holy Spirit has put into our heart. We must already have begun to listen eagerly, and to practise, as far as we understand the instruction of the Holy Spirit, if a director is to do us any real service. A director can only use the material that is brought to him, or rather teach his penitent to use it. It is quite possible that you or I might go for years to the confessional of a St Philip or a St Francis of Sales and be none the better for it, nay, have nothing in the way of spiritual advice worth recording, for saints, like other folk, must cut their coat according to their cloth. If you present a stringless instrument to the most skilful violinist, what more can he do with it than any other man? O my brethren, begin to listen to the voice of God in your hearts. Do not in the details of life be so afraid of making a mistake on God's side, of being a little over-liberal to the poor, or over-mortified, or over-devout. There will no doubt be something imperfect in all we do. A few mistakes on God's side will stand us in better stead than any strokes of worldly wisdom. When the child Samuel first heard the Lord's voice, he thought it was the high priest Eli calling him, and three times, in obedience as he thought, he got up from his bed, and came to his master. His three mistakes did not forfeit him God's intended favour, as lying still would have done. Even a conscience that has become to a certain degree warped by wrong-doing can only be educated by being obeyed, so far as we have light

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

at the moment; to ignore it, is to ignore the voice of God, broken and confused though it may be; yet an honest effort to understand what can be understood is the condition of any fuller instruction. Agree with your adversary whilst thou art in the way with him, says our Lord. God is our adversary, that is to say, He confronts us through life with His commandments, with the inspiration of His grace. We must listen, converse, agree now, or remain in hopeless discord with Him for all eternity.

B.—SEPTUAGESIMA TO EASTER

1. SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY

THE WORK OF LIFE

“ But about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing, and he saith to them : Why stand you here all the day idle ? They say to him : Because no man hath hired us. He saith to them : Go you also into my vineyard.”—*St Matt. xx. 6, 7.*

To some our Lord comes early in the morning, in their infancy. Religious parents, good education. Some persevere, some fall back into the market-place. Third hour—boyhood, first Communion. Sixth hour—early manhood, marriage perhaps. Ninth hour—middle age, ease, trouble, affliction. Eleventh hour—old age, sometimes a very long period, the last stage. Some people attain to that state of finality before others. It is of this eleventh hour that I would speak, and though I have assigned with some propriety all but the old to the previous hours, yet in truth this lesson of the eleventh hour belongs to each one of us, however young, for we cannot say that it is not the eleventh or last hour of the Lord’s visitation, and to all of us the Apostle says : “ Little children, it is the last hour.” (1 St John ii. 18.)

Are we in the vineyard or in the market-place ? Standing idle ? What it is to be out of work ! The degradation of idleness. We are all the day as good as idle, if we neglect the one work we are sent here to do—the conforming our hearts and lives to God’s holy law. The idleness of sin, its

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

varieties; of sloth, of pride, of ambition, of sensuality. Thou fool, of course this is worse than idleness; it is not only not doing work, but undoing work.

All work, however energetic, however lucrative, however conducive to the temporal well-being of ourselves or our neighbour, is sheer idleness if it usurps the place of the great work of our salvation. Supposing men were to work at their different trades on board a sinking vessel, instead of be-taking themselves to their boats, would it not be all idle work?

We have been idle long enough, and now He calls us, perhaps for the last time. He will hire us, even those who have least capacity and time for work. He promises that which is just to each of us, not what we of ourselves deserve, but what He has earned for us and in us, heaven, eternal life, even to those that come at the eleventh hour.

His generosity in offering us so much for so little. When a man is old, he is past work, and the world does not care to hire him. He cannot contribute any more to its pleasure or its profit.

The old sinner the devil does not care to hire; he sins habitually, almost mechanically, because he is a sinner.

The devil's pay was very poor at best, but now it is almost ostentatiously naught.

And then comes the Master, and says: "Go you also into my vineyard"; it would seem there is no such thing as spiritual pauperism, no workhouse wherein men are past work for God.

And the explanation of this is that the work which God requires of us is the work of the heart:

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

that we should turn to Him with our whole heart, and the day that the most world-worn, sin-worn sinner does this to his Divine Master, he is no more an unprofitable servant, for God is love, and the service He requires from each one of us is love expressed in action, so far only as opportunities are granted us.

It is this love, this generosity of Christ, that ought to be our lifelong meditation, nay, our thought for all eternity. On the Cross He cried "I thirst," and this was the expression of not merely a physical thirst, but of a spiritual thirst for love, and it has been responded to by thousands in every age of the Church, who have consecrated their lives to the satisfaction of that thirst, but it is not yet satisfied. He the All Pure, Who feeds amongst the lilies, is not content with the devotion of the saints; He must needs have the love of sinners. Thousands of ardent souls have offered Him, are offering Him, the unspilled treasure of their unsullied lives, and yet He craves the miserable dregs which the world and sin have left us, and which seem to us now so harsh and bitter, and which, as I have said, cannot any more command a price in the world's market. Be wise, for you know not, even the youngest amongst you, that this is not your last hour, and oh! be generous. There is a depth of ungenerosity which the worst of us could not face in himself, and yet it cannot be so deep as the ungenerosity of one who will put off and defers quenching the thirst of his dying Saviour because he thinks he may be able to put Him off with the dregs. "Little children, it is the last hour."

2. SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY

ON SELF-DENIAL

“ If you live according to the flesh, you shall die : but if by the Spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live.”—*Rom.* viii. 13.

Mortification is a very terrible word. It means a putting to death, a gradual killing. It is a word that you and I are very familiar with, however little we may know of the process.

The Church takes care that we should be familiar with the idea of mortification. In the Stations of the Cross we ask our Lord that we may crucify our flesh more and more by Christian penance. These are very grand noble words, and I hope that at any rate they represent an honest wish, even though it does not go as far as action.

I wish to put before you as well as I can some of the aspects and motives of Christian mortification.

The state of innocence—perfect subjection of the passions to reason. Temperance without pain.

Temperance now itself an acute mortification, so that with some wholly to abstain from a particular pleasure is less painful than a moderate use. Some have much more unruly passions than others. Some have one particular passion, like a great wild beast, which is the torment of their life.

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

Christian mortification I will define to be the voluntary refraining ourselves from pleasures not unlawful in themselves, for Christ's sake. And the universal duty of such mortification arises from the extreme difficulty we all have in our fallen state in keeping the law of God. It is the Christian's exercise, like the exercises and drill of a soldier, to prepare him for the combat. Protestants, when they broke away from the Church, began gradually to give up the idea of mortification. They said we may enjoy freely all that is in itself lawful. It is enough if we refrain where the law of God commands us to do so. The result, as acknowledged by their own writers. No one ever yet refrained from things unlawful who did not practise restraint in things lawful.

If we would break ourselves of some special bad habit which has possessed us, it is very important to practise self-restraint, not merely in that particular matter, but in other things, little things, the least things, anything that will give us an opportunity of submitting our necks to the yoke of Christ. I know Protestants are in the habit of laughing at the small things we call penance, such as the very modified practice of fasting and abstinence at present in use.

Mortification of the will.

As an *imitation* of Christ I will not speak of this now. I am considering it under its most necessary, its lowest, aspect—as a means of keeping out of sin.

Mortification is a terrible thought; it haunts us, and it will haunt us, as a neglected duty to the last, unless we acknowledge and begin in some sort

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

to practise it. Everyone, whether Christian or not, unless he be simply dissolute, practises mortification, although from no supernatural motive. He may be a thoroughly sensual man, yet you will not find him with his bottle always at his elbow, because he says if once I begin drinking, there is no stopping, and my health is ruined. All that I am asking of you is to act in a like manner, only from a supernatural motive, that you subject your passions to the yoke of Christ. Cut off some pleasure for Christ's sake, as an exercise against the time of temptation, never mind how small it is. You may not be able to fast or even to abstain, only for the love of God do something, particularly at this holy season; do not let Lent be a mere name to you. To every little mortification you shall undergo for Christ's sake, He will, by uniting it with His merits, give a sort of sacramental efficacy, to satisfy for past sin, and to strengthen the soul against future temptation.

It is very good for us, considering what bad hands we make at mortifications, that God has not left it to us. He mortifies us Himself. There must needs be trouble in this world for all, good and bad, and every day we live we are dying, as St Gregory says. (St Bridget's simile of the baking.)

The happiness of mortified people a mystery to us; yet this much we understand, that sin is a great misery to feel, still more *not* to feel, and mortification is a killing of sin, by strengthening the soul to resist it, as a medicine to expel evil humours.

Let us begin to go like little children to the

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

school of Christ, confessing that in our foolishness we do not understand the pleasure of the Cross, but that we are wearied out with the labour of sin, and that we want rest, we want peace, and will submit to any discipline to obtain it; and let us put our cause in the hands of our Mother Mary, and hope for all things, although the day of our life be far spent, and we have not yet learnt the alphabet of the Christian life.

3. QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY

THE LOVE OF GOD

“ If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

“ And if I should have prophecy and should know all mysteries, and all knowledge, and if I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

“ And if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.”

—I Cor. xiii. 1-3.

WHAT is this charity, of which the Apostle says that without it the best gifts of God and our noblest actions profit us nothing? It is the fulfilment of that greatest and first commandment, as our Lord Himself called it: “ Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind.” *Unless we fulfil this commandment*, whatever we may do in the shape of good works, whatever good we may do to our neighbours, however much we may sacrifice ourselves, though we should work miracles, it will profit us nothing, as far as heaven is concerned.

It may profit us much upon earth; we may win the love and admiration of our fellow-men, and we may rejoice in the pleasant consciousness of all

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

the good we have effected. But when the Master, our heavenly Master, the real Master of body and soul, comes to reckon with His servants, He will not ask us what we have done for ourselves or for others, but what we have done for Him.

If we have worked for others, to others we must go for our reward. Let them receive us into their houses, but do not let us expect to be received into those eternal mansions, which God has prepared for those who love Him.

When the Apostle speaks of so many good works, such as almsgiving and the like, as worthless without charity, he does not mean to encourage in us a cynical way of judging of these things. Where we see these good works, we should willingly give them the utmost credit, and believe them dictated by the love of Him Who has said: "Inasmuch as ye do good to the least of these, ye do it unto Me."

Our God is a jealous God. He will have us love Him with our whole heart, our whole soul, and our whole mind. But instead of excluding our neighbours from a part in our love, He has drawn them to Himself, and presents them to us as His members, as forming one object with Himself for our love. "The second commandment is *like unto* the first, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." He has commanded us to love our neighbour. He has made this love of our neighbour a test of our love for Him. If we love not our brother whom we have seen, how can we love God Whom we have not seen?

We have no conceivable excuse for thus divorcing our love for our neighbour from the love of God.

But the Apostle says, if we do so, if we love

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

our neighbour, our family, our country, etc., and under the inspiration of that love merely do the noblest, the most heroic actions, even give our bodies to be burnt, it will profit us nothing.

We are put in this world to love and serve Almighty God, and as part of that service are enjoined numberless good offices towards our neighbour. But the love of God ought to be the animating principle of all our actions, and without it all that we may do for our neighbour is no good.

Now though we should be anxious to attribute the best motives to the good actions of others, it will be well to criticise our own motives a little more severely.

If we be asked: "Do we love God?", how shall we answer? If we be asked: "Do you love your parents, your children, your friends?", we answer readily enough: "Of course we do." Why do we hesitate when asked if we love God? We can never say that we do not love Him; it would be like acquiescing in a blasphemy, and we do love Him when we think of Him. Our hearts may be very hard, but they are touched sometimes at the thought of His bitter Passion. Those pathetic reproaches, which we hear in the Church in Holy Week, for the moment at least pierce us to the quick. "My people, what have I done to thee, or in what have I aggrieved thee, that thou hast prepared a Cross for thy Saviour?"

We must then answer, that we do love God. All God's rational creatures may make this answer, verifying it as they make it by an act of love. All may do this, save those only who are in hell.

The less we say of the past the better. But now

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

at least we love God. But how do we love Him? Is it, as He bids us, with our whole heart, etc.? Ah, this is another thing, yet no other love will serve.

We know what our past lives have been, how far they have corresponded with the commandment.

The great test whether we truly love God or not, over and above the avoiding great sin, is this: Do we cheerfully, patiently, and faithfully, go through the common ordinary duties of the day? This is a great test, for these common daily duties have for the most part little that is attractive; they are very wearisome, they are with the majority of us repetitions of the same thing over again; nothing but the love of God can make us patient and cheerful in the persevering discharge of them. We can imagine doing great things, making great sacrifices for the love of God, and, if they were really put in our way, supposing our courage not to fail, there would be great danger in our doing them for ourselves, and not for God at all.

What the Apostle means to teach us is, that the most ordinary duties of a commonplace life, say in a Birmingham factory, if performed for the love of God, are better worth—by the worth of eternal life—than the heroic actions of a St Francis Xavier, if you suppose these actions separated from the heroic love which inspired them.

We must remember that God has many servants, some to do great things, and some to do small, and some who seem hardly to do anything, yet true servants for all that, because at heart ever ready to do their Maker's will. They also serve who only stand and wait.

4. ASH WEDNESDAY

THE WORK OF LENT

“Remember man that thou art dust, and unto dust thou shalt return.”—*Gen.* iii. 19.

ASHES—dust—the insignia of sorrow and penitence throughout the Old Testament. Not only amongst the Jews, but amongst the heathen. At the preaching of Jonas, the King of Ninive rose from his throne, and laid aside his garments, clothed himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. “Woe unto thee, Corozain.” (*St Matt.* xi. 21.)

Ashes represent the destruction of sin, of the body of sin. The monster, drowned so to speak in Baptism, but when come to life again, in our own wilful actions, must be destroyed, utterly consumed with fire, the fire of the love of God. Its painful action upon sin a mystic death. The same fire warms, and revives, and unites; makes death to sin tolerable, and even sweet, for the love of God is strong as death.

Ashes—dust—the thought of death. Incitement to penitence—remedy against sin. Description in Isaias of the idolater who, taking wood, uses some of it to make a fire, and then of the rest maketh a god, a part whereof is ashes. Such our worship of self and selfish pleasures, part whereof time

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

has already reduced to ashes, and soon will reduce the whole.

The whole of a Christian's life should be a ceaseless penance, says the Council of Trent; but now, in Lent, the Church specially invites us. The Epistles, the Gospels, the collects through Lent, all suggest that a great work is to be undertaken.

We are ready to dance when she pipes, but are we ready to mourn when she laments? We can be merry with her at Christmas, and bright and hopeful at Easter, but what during Lent? It is the time when the Church reiterates in every tone and aspect her Master's lesson: "Unless you deny yourself," etc., and she marks out for us the *Via Crucis*, and insists that it is by no means necessary that we should live, but that it is by all means necessary that living we should follow out the end of our creation, God's service; and that its frustration is the one evil of life against which we must fight incessantly; that in the Cross alone there is victory, in the Cross alone peace.

What is it practical for us to do? Our formal obligation, fasting and abstinence, are in great measure done away with. Realise your ideal, not your dream, but that improved self which suggests itself to you at serious times—the same picture that perhaps you know from real life, but I dare not say how different. To the eyes of angels all the difference between you well-dressed and cared for, and you after nights and nights of sleeping in your clothes.

The penance of regularity. Presence of God. Thoughtfulness for others. Regulation of temper. Curtailing of indulgences. Making the fact that

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

the thing is a cross something in its favour rather than against it. Yourself thus worked upon will be yourself still, far short of sanctity, but at least not out of keeping with holiness, not wholly unfit to be a fellow-citizen of the saints.

Do you remember the beautiful words attributed to St Andrew, when he saw the cross on which he was to hang? "O good cross, that hast gotten loveliness from the limbs of the Lord, long wanted, assiduously loved, sought for unceasingly, and now at length made ready for my thirsting soul; take me from men, and give me to my Master, that through thee He may receive me who did through thee redeem me." Let us too salute the cross of our life with similar affection, though with a necessary difference: "O good cross, long loathed, carefully avoided, persistently forsaken, and now awaiting my repentant soul, deliver me from myself and men, and give me to my Master."

5. FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

THE HEART OF UNBELIEF

“ Take heed, brethren, lest perhaps there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, to depart from the living God. But exhort one another every day, whilst it is called to-day, that none of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.”—*Heb.* iii. 12, 13.

FAITH is to believe without doubting whatsoever God has revealed. Belief is an assent of the intellect upon authority—an act of the mind. What has the heart to do with it? What is the meaning of “an evil heart of unbelief,” of which the text speaks? I propose to consider this point.

There are many truths to which we assent necessarily, i.e., without being able to withhold our assent, for example, that two and two make four, or that the whole is greater than its part, the denial of which would involve a contradiction, or an affirmation and denial of the same thing at the same time. Again there are certain facts which, though presented to us formally as matters of human authority, are so interwoven with the whole structure of our experience that we are simply incapable of rejecting them, as, for instance, the existence of many places which we have never seen. On the other hand, there are

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

a vast number of assents which are quite necessary to the proper conduct of our lives, but which we are capable of withholding, and which we are sometimes tempted to withhold. For instance, we are tempted to suspect our best friends in moments of temper. Under some sudden whim, we are inclined to say: "How do I know but that all this friendliness is put on to cover indifference or even a sinister purpose." Sometimes this suspiciousness goes to such an extent that people say the man is mad: short of this, it is "the evil heart of unbelief." In human matters, the belief in a mother's love, a wife's honour, a friend's affection, at least an habitual belief is subject to the action of free-will, however consonant with natural instinct it may be, yet we can educate ourselves out of it, and the way to do so is by hardening our hearts, by giving way to evil passions.

An unfaithful husband is inclined to be suspicious of the most faithful wife's fidelity, and this not merely from the consciousness of his demerits, but because people in such matters, are disinclined to believe in that for which they are out of sympathy. Looked at naturally as a human act, it is to this order of assents that Divine faith belongs. It is not a necessary act, but a free act. If it were not free it would not be meritorious, which it is, for we should deserve no thanks for doing what we could not help doing.

It is quite true that to a well-regulated intellect the grounds for believing, or rather for saying I must believe, transcend mere probability, but as we are constituted, in our present relations with this world and the world to come, there can be

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

no due regulation of the reason which does not involve *pari passu* a cultivation of the heart. It is as absurd to attempt to submit faith to the criterion of demonstration as to attempt to regulate our social relations by mathematics. It is a common objection made by unbelievers against Divine faith that it exalts a probability into a certainty, that it is an unreasonable enthusiasm, erecting an extravagant structure upon confessedly insufficient foundations. Apply the same criticism to a child's belief in his mother's love, or a friend's belief in the friend of many years. Bid him state on paper the precise justification of this full assent, this perfect rest that he enjoys, or, if he cannot do this to the satisfaction of unprejudiced observers, i.e., those to whom both the mother and the friend are strangers, he must qualify his assent with the reserves of doubt. Surely common sense would put such criticism out of court. It is beside the point to urge that persons have ere now been deceived in love and friendship. What I maintain is that you have no right to condemn the subjective certainty, the fearless undoubting adhesion of Divine faith, because, when stated in terms of the bare intellect, its grounds do not seem to rise beyond the sphere of probability. I say *seem* to rise, because if we were able to state completely the grounds of our regarding it as a duty to believe, our grounds would appear not probable but certain.

Even in such truths of religion as are also truths, and certain truths, of the natural reason, such as the being of a God, the rewarder of the good, the punisher of the bad, the truth is so gigantic,

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

both in its conception and in the ethical demands it makes upon us, that we require good, brave hearts to persevere in its contemplation sufficiently for any practical purposes. It requires great energy and goodwill to believe in God habitually. The argument that brings you to it is like a bridge over an abyss, perfectly safe really, but at such a height that your brain swims. You need good heart to trust your own faculties in such a sphere. I have been speaking of the natural human side of the act of faith. Of course there is the action of God, not merely as in all other good actions, a movement of His grace, prompting you to do what lies in you, but a correspondence with you by the infusion of certain supernatural habits which raise the assent to a *supernatural* certainty. God holds the soul, as it were, in His Divine grasp on the height which it may have attained by the use of its natural faculties, although even this process was not unassisted by grace. Of course the process of education in the faith of one who has had the seed of faith implanted in him at his Baptism, cultivated *pari passu* with the growth of his intelligence, is so far different that he, as it were, finds himself in practical possession of the result before he has begun to examine the process. He has not for the most part by a painful effort to subject his reason to the captivity of Christ; he has been brought up in that blessed state. Still, just as an education of the heart was necessary in order to bring an alien to the faith, so it is necessary for the preservation of the faith, whether attained or inherited.

This is the object of all, I have been saying, to

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

make you realise that in order to preserve the faith we must in any case love God, i.e., we must keep His commandments. Faith is necessary in order to love, but love is often necessary in order to go on believing. Sin affects our power of assenting to no other truths but those of faith, except so far as certain excesses may impair the reason. But as regards faith, all deliberate mortal sin has a tendency to throw its truths, so to speak, out of focus. True, mortal sin, whilst destroying the habit of charity, does not destroy the habit of faith. Whether this is owing to the nature of things or to a specially merciful dispensation of God is disputed. But, on the other hand, it is a great mistake to think that faith can remain what it was when charity is gone. The faith which justifies is said to be *fides formata*, faith formed, i.e., faith with its life and soul in it, with that in it which is to it what the soul is to the body. The body of faith is not allowed to fall to pieces, but it is nigh unto corruption. It is a flickering lamp without oil that a little breath may extinguish.

You may urge that I must be exaggerating, that there are so many ill-livers who have the faith vividly. Now, I do not deny that God's mercy allows of this phenomenon. I attribute its frequency to the share in the Communion of Saints which even external Communion with the Catholic Church gives, but I am convinced that we often think that faith remains where faith is extinct. A man, particularly if he has been brought up in the Church, if his friends and relatives are Catholic, will go on using the language of a faith from which he has unconsciously drifted.

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

The hardness of sin has produced the evil heart of unbelief, and he is severed from the living God by his unbelief as well as by his ill-living. There is a fable told, in various shapes, of a magician who had the power of causing his soul to leave his body, and whilst lifeless to roam elsewhere until it pleased him to return to it, and that once a malicious disciple burnt the body, and the soul had no domicile left for it. So, my brethren, according to the just decree of Almighty God it sometimes is with those who have kept a dead faith beside them, according to which they did not live.

When, under the pressure of trouble and distress, they would fain seek a refuge in the consoling truths of the religion they have neglected without, as they thought, wholly relinquishing it, they have found that the structure of their faith had crumbled away, and, desiring to believe, they cry in their anguish that they are not able. True, God in His unspeakable mercy may restore it to them, but what claim have they that He should do this for them? They have left their faith untenanted by the soul of charity. What wonder if it corrupts.

My brethren, it is exquisitely painful to meet amongst one's friends or acquaintance a young man who, after leading a careless life, wakes up to the consciousness that he no longer believes, and exclaims that he tries to believe and cannot. But even this, painful as it is, is less dreadful, is more hopeful, from the very distress it is calculated to cause, than a lethargy which knows not if it believes or not, and so goes on till the end.

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

On his death-bed the sinner finds not unfrequently that his faith has vanished; his wife and children bring the priest, and holy words are said and holy rites performed, and the dying man takes it all mechanically, even if he had the heart to repel it. Why should he grieve his family? To those who look on he dies in the faith, but the light of faith in which he seems to die comes from the lamps of those who minister about him. His own lamp is extinguished, and so he gropes his way through the dark passage of death into the angry light of judgment. If you live outside your faith, and leave it dead beside you, you may find it gone when you wish again to inhabit it.

I do not say that this last misery happens very often; God is very merciful, but I say that it does happen, and then, when it does, it is well deserved. It behoves us to take care lest the evil heart of unbelief separate us from the living God, lest, ceasing to love Him, we should cease also to believe in Him, and so have no home for our love.

Anyhow, my brethren, this is a truth of everyday experience, that the familiar use of even the holiest things, if it does not make us grow in love and reverence, breeds indifference, if not contempt. It is a dangerous thing to be used to the sublime truths, and to the Sacraments of the Catholic Church, if these do not really affect our lives. The first sight of our Lord, the being allowed to kiss His feet, was enough to make a great saint of the Magdalen. On the other hand, see how the graces of the Last Supper, and the ineffable tenderness of our Lord's last pleading with Judas in the garden when He called him friend and yielded His Divine

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

face to his faithless kiss, how all this was thrown away upon the priest and the apostle. Judas' death-bed graces were exquisitely strong and tender, doubtless, as are those of the Viaticum and Extreme Unction; but if you have abused Christ's companionship during your life, it may well be, nay, it is exceedingly likely, that even His last caress may be disregarded.

6. SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

THE THOUGHT OF HEAVEN

"Lord, it is good for us to be here."—*St Matt.* xvii. 4.

OF what place, condition, circumstances, company, can we say "it is good for us to be here"? Of none whatever in this world, with absolute certainty, however pleasant, however apparently wholesome they may be; neither in the intensest reverse, affliction, or temptation, can we say that it is not good for us to be here.

That is good for us which helps us on the road to heaven; that is bad for us which hinders us on that road. In heaven we shall for the first time be able to say with absolute confidence: "Lord, it is good for us to be here," or in Purgatory, which is the porch of heaven.

In this life we are blind to the true significance and the real outcome of events; sometimes subsequent experience enables us to correct our mistakes, but often they remain mistakes to the end. Any events may be good, will have some good in them, for us, if we are good; "for the good all things work together unto good," but we are not good.

Anyhow this world is no good place, no possible place, to make a home of.

Those whose eyes God has opened, warn us that

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

we are like children playing on the shore, with the tide coming in; the sea will soon cover our playground. There is no peace or safety for us, unless we climb the rock, unless we lay up our treasure in heaven.

It is necessary that we should meditate upon heaven. Of the two great motives, desire and fear, I think, where the object of both are distant, a very little consideration will convince us that desire is much the stronger and more efficacious. It is different when the lash of fear is actually impending. For one man who has led an industrious life in order to escape the workhouse, there are a hundred who have done so to win comfort and independence. I believe the thought of heaven will do more for us than the thought of hell, and for this reason amongst others, that the thought of heaven not only suggests hell as its inevitable alternative, but supplies that without which we cannot understand the greatest pain of hell, viz., that of loss, by presenting us with those objects the loss of which constitutes hell. Therefore, inspired by that glimpse of heaven which so ravished St Peter, let us, under the guidance of holy men, make in spirit that great journey which we one day hope to make in reality from earth to heaven.

Let us imagine ourselves seated in the fiery chariot of the prophet Elias, swiftly leaving the earth behind us, yet not so swiftly but that we know what we are doing. Let us cast our last look upon the earth, before it vanishes from our sight, a glimmering point in the far distance; all its tremendous interests dwindled to a pin's head, one of the most insignificant of the orbs with which God

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

has strewn the firmament. And now the moon is floating beneath us like a little feather, and now with unshrinking eyes we gaze upon the vast mass of the sun, God's great vice-regent and representative in our system. And we think of the sun of Justice, and long to look upon His face, and now we are reminded that all these multitudinous orbs, so glorious in their crystalline radiance, and so harmonious in their revolutions, are but the adornments of the vault upon which the foundations of the heavenly Jerusalem are set, that Jerusalem of which we are the rightful citizens.

Neither height, nor breadth, nor length, nor anything created may any more separate us from God, neither may anything short of God satisfy us; and so we are borne ever upwards, until we are indeed come to that golden city with its gates of pearl, which hath no need of the sun nor of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God hath enlightened it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.

And now in the contemplation of heaven, each one must make good his own footing with what strength of imagination and keenness of affection God has given him. Verily it is good for us to be here, although in spirit only.

See as the gates open what a glorious welcome! There are faces indeed there we knew we should see, parents, brothers, friends, who could not but meet us, and share in our triumph. Kind eyes, with the old light in them we knew so well on earth. But this is not all; the whole of that glorious company, angels, archangels, martyrs, virgins, meet us with hymns and congratulations. Who are we that we should be so welcomed? Have we

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

come up with our garments red from the winepress of suffering, with the martyr's palm in our hand? Are we one of those who have died planting the Faith in China or Japan, which, in our own day, have given so many martyrs to the Church? Then indeed such welcome were fitting. But what right has the puny crop we have borne so indifferently to this? Yet we must have fought, and suffered, and conquered, or we shall not be received at all; and as conquerors we are received. Our Holy Patrons, at whose feet we would fain cast ourselves, will not suffer it. They embrace us and greet us with the words of the Apostle: "Now are ye no longer strangers and guests, but fellow-citizens of the saints."

Many of us may recollect the triumphant pleasure of our birthdays as children, when, by some mysterious right, on one day in the year we became the centre of a circle of well-wishers and for the nonce a sort of king, by no merit of our own, but as it were by right divine. I think after-life shows no such triumphs, none so unshadowed by discontent and remorse, none affording so fair a picture of the solemnity which ushers a soul into the heavenly city, that birthday of the new life, which shall never end, when the Church triumphant, gathering to its bosom the new-comer though the least in the kingdom of heaven, rejoices over him as a mother over her newly born; and presents him in triumph before the throne as the last fruit of the Precious Blood. On earth it is only the few that triumph; in heaven all the least are kings, and triumph as fully as though they alone triumphed, nay, far more fully, for love is

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

the life of heaven, and all triumph in the triumph of each. This triumph is for ever.

In the presence of the source of light and life, the youth of the Blessed is renewed like the eagle's; they partake of the life of God, the ancient of days, yet Who is as He was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be.

In the heavenly life, the freshness of morning and the peace of evening is woven into an eternal day; all the acerbities and conventionalities of life, which make this life so tedious, will have vanished in an intercourse in which each has his place, and each ministers to the beauty and happiness of each.

It is far better that we should distort by our feeble imagination the life of the Blessed, than that we should not busy ourselves with it at all. It is what lies before us; it is the supreme goal of our lives; its door is not yet shut against us, as so many other doors are shut. They keep shutting as life goes on. We might have become scholars, had we chosen once when we were young. In the first decade or so of our professional life, we might have made our fortunes; that door is shut for many of us, and so with many other doors which, not having entered already, we cannot enter now; but there is still the door of heaven open, or at least to be opened, and for all of us the time will come when it will be finally closed against us, or receive us into the joy of our Lord. In that joy of His and ours we shall repeat for all eternity: "Lord, it is good for us to be here."

7. THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

THE OCCASIONS OF SIN

“When a strong man armed keepeth his court, those things are in peace which he possesseth.”

—*St Luke xi. 21.*

WHAT is this court? It is the courtyard, or perhaps the hall—that chamber or space, through which all who would enter the house must pass. It suggests very much the same idea as the term *pomerium* with respect to a city. The ancient walled cities were by way of keeping a clear circle of open ground round them, not enclosed, but marked by a line. Within this circle no buildings were allowed, lest they should yield cover to an enemy, or be used to set fire to the walls. This *pomerium* was a clear open space upon which the sunlight or moonlight could fall unbroken, so that no one might pass unnoticed by those who were keeping watch upon the walls.

“When a strong man armed keepeth his court, or his precinct, those things are in peace which he possesseth.”

We are bound to avoid not only sin, but the occasions of sin. Of course some occasions are so proximate that we are obliged to regard all wilful

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

exposure to them as in itself sin, so that a confessor may not give absolution when he is not assured that his penitent means to avoid them. But beyond these, there are large classes of occasions upon the avoidance of which practically our salvation depends, but which are not always precise enough for the confessor to deal with in a summary manner. These occasions often lie in the neglect of certain precautions, certain pious exercises, mortifications, punctualities, our daily mass, or meditation, our weekly confession, which form as it were the *pomerium* or precinct of our spiritual life, guarding which we will be secure, because the enemy will not be able to approach our walls to rob us of the gift of sanctifying grace.

The same precinct is not prescribed for everyone, but for each one a precinct is drawn by the finger of God, and within it, by submitting to its conditions, by living up to it, not contenting ourselves with the bare general commandment, we shall work out our salvation, if we work it out at all. This is the meaning of vocation. It is a great mistake to limit that word to the priestly or religious life. Those who are in the world, because they have no external rule, have a special necessity to adhere pertinaciously to that way of life which their experience of God's dealings with them and of their own necessities marks out for them.

The misery is that we are alternately cowardly and self-confident—cowardly, when there is question of turning to God, or making some decided step in the direction of virtue—self-confident, when there is question of avoiding occasions. (The old story of the man who, having narrowly escaped

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

in a shipwreck, blocked up all the windows of his house that looked on the sea.)

How easy comparatively to conquer temptations when the object of it is not immediately before you ! The devil, knowing this, is not contented with describing all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them which he will give our Lord in return for His homage, but he takes Him up into a high mountain and displays them before his eyes. Such is the effect of the *presence* of the object, e.g., in gambling, drinking, etc.

Let us consider upon what it is we base our confidence. Is it upon our experience of our own strength, upon our great progress in virtue since our last fall, or upon the grace which God has promised us ? The strong man *armed* ?

Strong are we, be it so, but we are not as strong as the saints. In one of St Jerome's controversies he was taunted by his opponent, the heretic Vigilantius, for living like a wild beast in the desert. The saint made answer that he was afraid of the temptations of the city, and when pressed that this was not very heroic but a piece of cowardice, he seems to forget his enemy, and exclaims in the depth of his humility : " I own my weakness, I own my weakness," and this was a great saint, after years of solitude and mortification, with his frame emaciated by fasting and his breast livid with bruises from the stone with which he was wont to beat it.

Saints may fall, nay, saints have fallen. So much for our strength, and now as to the grace of God. God does not work a miracle when human means are sufficient. The star left the Magi at

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

Jerusalem where they could inquire. The angel struck off St Peter's chains, but left him to clothe himself. Lazarus was not raised until the stone had been rolled away. The miracle of grace will be wrought in our behalf, if our temptations, however grievous, are unavoidable. Like the three children in the furnace, or Noe with all his company in the ark.

"God has given His angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways"; but not if you go out of them, and choose a precipice. He who loves danger shall perish by it. "Who hath pity," says Ecclesiasticus, "for a serpent-charmer bitten by a serpent?"

God has ever set a hedge, as it were, about His commandments, marking the occasion along with the sin. The fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was not to be eaten, and God commanded that it should not even be touched. When the law was being given on Mount Sinai, the people were not to go up; they were forbidden even to come near it. The Nazarites, who were forbidden wine, were not allowed to eat grapes or raisins. At the Pasch leavened bread, which might not be eaten, was forbidden even to be kept in the house. And the Christian law consists in great measure of prohibitions barring the occasions of breaking the ancient law. Kill—thou fool; perjury—yea, yea, and nay, nay; adultery, not even look at a woman to lust after her. "Thou shalt be called the setter of hedges," says Isaias of our Lord. (Is. lviii. 12.)

And now as regards voluntary occasions of sin we are neither *strong* nor *armed*.

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

There are many occasions of sin which are negative, e.g., neglects in respect to certain matters, not in themselves or specifically involving sin, but which we know and, in our better moments, acknowledge are of vital importance to us. We are conscious that the walls have not yet been entered, but how is it with that outer circle of pious practices? Have we allowed any intrusion upon them, have we suffered the world to throw up any cover for the evil one upon the space which is sacred to the service of God and our spiritual preservation? If this be the case, then, in God's name, lose no time in applying a remedy, for the enemy is but one remove from capturing your city.

St Joseph is steward of the house of God. We can only hold the castle of our soul against the enemy by having Jesus within it, also Mary and Joseph. How often has it been taken, and we confined in its lowest dungeon! St Joseph can tell us how to furnish our soul so as to be a fit abode for Jesus and Mary. With that Divine prudence which made him fit to be the guardian of Jesus and Mary, he will instruct us as to our vocation, as to what is best and fittest for us in the actions and practices of every day. He will enable us to guard that court or precinct of ours. He will enable us to appreciate the relative importance of things, to keep in peace those things which we possess.

8. FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD

“ And Jesus making answer said to them : Go and relate to John what you have heard and seen. The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, the poor have the Gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who shall not be scandalised in Me.”—*St Matt. xi. 4-6.*

AFTER all these miracles, *scandalised!* Yes, the world was shocked, offended, disgusted at our Lord, by His doctrine, by His law, by His suffering, by His death. *Scandalum Crucis*, the scandal of the Cross. As the Pharisees protested against our Lord's healing on the Sabbath day, so the world protested, and has gone on protesting, and now protests more emphatically than ever, against the benefits of Christianity as more than counter-balanced by the uncongeniality of its doctrine. If men are to be healed of their blindness and lameness and deafness, if they are to be raised from death to life at the expense of their worldliness, let them remain contented, respectable citizens of the world, corpses in the body of this death; or, better still, cannot the world itself become the good physician, and make the blind to see, and the lame to walk, and the deaf to hear, and the dead to

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

rise again? The Gospel, says the world of to-day, may have had its use once, but its day is over; and then it might add, were it to speak out its full thought, even now the Gospel might be adapted to the poor and the ignorant, but then poverty and ignorance are in course of being done away with. And moreover Christianity, the Church, will have her word to the rich as well as to the poor; if she teaches the latter to be contented in their poverty, she tells the former that it is more difficult for a rich man to enter the kingdom than for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, and then, with a boldness of speculation which shocks the world by its extravagance, bids them lay up for themselves treasure in heaven, and redeem their souls by almsgiving.

This then is the position of affairs, the relations between the world and the Church. The world says, whatever good you once were, and we could raise a scruple or two on that head, did we choose to be ungracious, for though you in fact presided over our education, we are not sure you did not prevent a far more rapid and healthy development that would otherwise have taken place; anyhow we can now do without you, far better without you. And the Church answers: I began by doing you good in your own despite, when like a delirious patient you tore your physician. I am not likely to leave off now when you treat my efforts with contemptuous indifference. I never mistook your real feelings in my regard; if you condescended to sit at my board, it was only because you found it better spread with what you could turn to practical account than any other.

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

On one point the Church and the world are agreed, and that is that the generations as they succeed one another, have their blind and lame, and deaf and dead, and that it would be well if some remedy could be applied whereby they should see and hear and walk and live.

And now to an unbiassed observer, if unbiassed observer there could be of such a conflict, it must seem that the Church is in a cruel plight, for she has ministered her own weapons to her enemy; she educated the world's mind and the world's heart under the influences of religion. The world was once the Church's scholar, even in secular knowledge and as regards humanity. The most cultivated portion of the human race under Paganism hardly knew what it meant, and Christians, even before the times of persecution had ceased, obtained a qualified recognition as the managers of a sort of house of refuge for infirm and aged slaves. Not that the government cared for the lives of such persons, but it was a social convenience to have them decently buried, which Christians undertook, and this was over and above their devotion to their own sick and poor.

Three words, when the world was Christian, did the Church embroider upon the world's flag, Humanity, Education, and Religion. And now the same flag with the third word erased is borne against her. Pure, religionless humanity and secular education are the world's watchwords in its battle with the Church. Our Lord told His disciples that He was sending them as sheep in the midst of wolves. Well, if the wolves have become less wolfish from the association, it is so far a

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

victory for the sheep. We must rejoice at any good, whether it be wrought immediately in the name of Christ or not; all good and all diminution of evil is effected by His power, and will ultimately make for the Church's cause, although at first sight it seems to weight the battle so heavily against her.

In matter of fact, we know that without religion neither the cause of education nor humanity can prosper. We know it from the appointed mission of the Church to teach all nations. Religion is an integral part of the education both of the mind and the heart. Then the natural reason suggests: if the motives for morality which religion supplies are withdrawn, morality must needs loosen its grasp upon the human heart. And experience, so far as it has gone, confirms our surmise, for our prisons are filling with excellent scholars, so far as mere secular attainments go.

Alas, the world must needs prove a poor educator of youth, when it loses the traditional respect for youthful innocence, along with the most efficient means of preserving it. This appreciation of innocence, although not wholly unrepresented in the Pagan world, was practically a creation of Christianity. The outcome of her teaching was from Him Who received little children, and proposed them as models. Cease to regard childhood as something sacred, something near to God, and it becomes a mere plaything. The present age is very sentimental about childhood, and its joys, and its sorrows; but every year children's books and entertainments suggest that the world is growing less and less careful of its innocence. As to

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

humanity, sympathy with suffering, and earnest effort to relieve it, although that remains as yet in its integrity, yet we have been shocked by a hideous form, which in the religionless morality would fain have taken its station by the bed of incurable disease, and in its hatred of suffering killed the sufferer. As Christ's hands blessed childhood, so those same hands outstretched upon the Cross consecrated suffering. Human nature requires the assistance of religion to keep it from falling below the level of its best natural sympathies and affection. This lesson the world would seem to be about to learn at a frightful cost.

The conflict will needs be a cruel one, and the Church, though she can never be wholly overcome, will sustain many defeats, and even her own children, as before so now, will be tempted to distrust her, and to be scandalised at her. They must remember the promise of the text: "Blessed is he who is not scandalised in me." But over and above the Divine promise that the Church's mission to the world will never cease so long as the world lasts, and therefore will never cease achieving a measure of success, there are strong natural grounds for taking comfort. First, Religion has a strong natural ally in the heart of man, which, as one of the Fathers has said, is naturally Christian, and this God-given nature with which each man enters into the world pleads most powerfully against the evil tradition of mere worldliness, which is of the devil and no part of human nature. The obstinate pleadings of conscience, the cravings after immortality, are a continual protest in favour of those higher portions of our nature which the

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

world in its blind utilitarianism ignores, and which it has ever been a function of religion to defend.

A most remarkable testimony is borne to the necessity of religion by the fact that a leading school amongst the infidels of the day attempts formally to satisfy these wants by offering itself as not merely a philosophy under the name of positivism, but as a religion, a worship, with an elaborate ritual, not the worship of God, but of humanity, of human nature. So it comes to pass that our enemies are divided, and on a most vital point.

When I consider the division of our enemies, and especially the involuntary witness for us in their own hearts, I am inclined to feel that the victory is in our hands. In spite of, nay, in virtue of the scandal of the Cross, our triumph would be secure, were it not for the scandal we give, not by our doctrines, but by our unchristian practice. By the former we do but shock the evil tradition of worldliness which is not really a part of human nature; by the latter we offend our best ally, the native Christianity of the soul. It needs must be that scandals come, but woe unto that man by whom the scandal cometh. Woe, a thousand woes to him in whose evil, impure, unstable, inconsistent life the ray of Christian truth is broken, distorted, and lost, whose life throws back the inquirer whom the light of Christian truth is drawing.

Scandal is especially a diabolical sin, a spiritual murder and offence against the Holy Spirit, against the Redemption. Our dreadful responsibility in the sins of others. As the Psalmist says: "Who understandeth sin? from my secret sins cleanse me,

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

O Lord, and from the sins of others spare me, O Lord."

When it was a question of what was in itself allowable, St Paul said: "If my food scandalise my brother, I will not eat flesh for ever."

If you will avoid giving scandal, scandal will not be given you; and this is no mean reward, for however strong you may seem to be, however firmly set you may be really in the faith, there are scandals that would try it to the uttermost. Deal tenderly with others, live as in some sort responsible for their souls as well as your own, and Christ will deal tenderly with you, and no poisonous thing shall harm you.

It will come to be seen in the great day of account, when to each one is given according to his deserts, that a good Christian life, however single and obscure, is a better apology for Christianity than all that workers and preachers can produce. The Christian life accompanied with true Christian language, be it only that of some poor child in a factory, is the entrenched camp about which the hostile tide chafes in vain.

9. PASSION SUNDAY

THE SACRED PASSION

THE idea of Passion Sunday. The Passion from a distance. Its significance apt to be lost in the quick doing of Holy Week.

Ecce Homo. Behold my beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased. *Ecce Agnus Dei.*

We ought to meditate on the Passion especially during this week.

Importance of meditating on the Passion. The food of the Saints, it may make us saints.

Fr. Thomas of Jesus—his use of the Passion. The Passion of God—those who deny that our Lord died for man, and those who knowing it make so light of it.

The pathos of any foolish tale will move us. We are tender-hearted enough towards all others save to Him Who laid down His life for us.

The Passion of Christ: (1) the joy of heaven, (2) the cleansing torment of Purgatory, (3) the despair of hell.

Even in the face of the angry Judge, Who bids them depart into everlasting fire, the wicked see the love they have lost for ever, as with a bitter sea their souls are flooded with the recollection of all the mercies they have despised, of all the Blood that

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

has been shed for them in vain. Even the words of their sentence remind them that the everlasting fire was not prepared for them.

Our imagination cannot embrace this loveless remorse. The torment of hell as contrasted with Purgatory.

The Passion helps us to understand hell. The King's son who dies for the traitor who volunteers to be the executioner!

Now what we have to do this Passiontide is each to take our Crucifix in our hand, and beg His pardon for all those cruel deeds, and ask ourselves whether we have the heart to repeat that crucifixion.

The Crucifix the great book for all Christians, high or low, rich and poor, learned or unlearned.

Do we often kiss the Crucifix? The last kiss we shall give or receive. Did you ever see a dying man kiss his Crucifix, as a thirsty man drinks water? God grant that we may even at our last hour find out our true friend, and God forgive us the many times we have kissed with the kiss of Judas, only to betray.

10. PALM SUNDAY

OUR LORD A WITNESS TO THE TRUTH

“ For this was I born, and for this came I into the world : that I should give testimony to the truth. Everyone that is of the truth, heareth My voice. And Pilate saith to Him : What is truth? And when he said this, he went out again.”—*St John* xviii. 37, 38.

THIS was our Lord's account of His Mission, of His Life's work. He is a witness to the truth, and for this very purpose He has come into the world. Surely these are very wonderful words, as much at least for what they do not say, as for what they do. Has not Christ other and more brilliant claims to our regard? Is He not King, the founder of a kingdom which is to last to the end of the world, a conqueror of Death and Hell, above all a Redeemer, the Lamb of God Who taketh away the sins of the world? And yet the work, the one work, that He insists upon as the object of His life and of His death, is that of witnessing to the truth. Of course I know the work of redemption and conquest, the foundation of the Church, formed but one work with that of witnessing to the truth; but still it was the particular office of witness to the truth which He set forth as giving the clef note to His life: “ For this came I into the world.”

The Holy Spirit, Whose coming is promised as

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

making up, and more than making up, for the loss of Christ's visible presence, is always spoken of as the spirit of truth, who is to *teach* primarily and to bring home to men all Christ's previous lessons. (St John xiv. 26.) Again, when our Lord prays for His disciples that they may be sanctified, His words are: "Sanctify them in truth, for thy word is truth." (St John xvii. 17.) It is truth, not consolation, not even sanctification, that is enforced as the primary concern of the Paraclete, and this because the root of sanctification is faith. The wound of ignorance must first be healed, before we can begin to live in the love of God. We must have faith in God before we love Him, and in accordance with this the commission is given to the Apostles to carry out the work of Christ. They are bidden not primarily to heal or to comfort, but to teach and to put to school all nations. The Church, then, is first presented to us as an organisation for teaching, and with her as such Christ promises to remain even unto the end of the world. (St Matt. xxviii. 20.) And what, in a word, is this truth? In the seventeenth chapter of St John, in which our Lord addresses the Eternal Father, He says: "I have made known to them Thy name, and I will make it known, that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them"—the name of God, that is His nature, one God in the three Divine Persons, and His relations with us in Creation, Redemption, Sanctification, and, under the last head, our relations with His Church. This is the truth to bear witness to which, to authorise which, Christ, as He said to Pilate, had come into the world.

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

The word " truth " attracts Pilate's attention for the moment. But it merely suggests an abstract question, as we see from the form of his interrogation: " What is truth? " not " What is *the* truth? " to which our Lord was witnessing. His mind reverted doubtless to the academic question which young students in the schools of philosophy were accustomed to discuss as to the nature of the true, the beautiful, and the good. He does not care for the answer: he thinks he knows it, or perhaps he thinks that it admits of no practical answer. He is sincerely anxious, if it may be done without too great a sacrifice, to deliver Christ from His enemies, and this appeal to truth does but confirm His feeling that Christ is an innocent dreamer, incapable of serious mischief. So, without waiting for an answer, he goes out to see if he may this time prevail with the crowd to release their victim.

It seems to me that the world outside the Catholic Church, even those who believe that they accept Christ, behave very much after the fashion of Pilate. They are impatient of dogma, which simply means religious truth clearly and emphatically expressed. They are willing to accept the moral example of Christ, and the mysterious benefit which they attribute to His death: they like to think of Him as the Prince of Peace, under whose benign influence the sword shall be turned into a plough-share: but as to accepting His teaching literally and absolutely, every word of it, they think this is hardly necessary, nay, that they can make a far better case for toleration with the hostile crowd without, if, in this respect, they may be given a certain latitude. It is needless to say that

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

with reference to the organisation called the Catholic Church, with which, if we are to believe the Gospels, Christ as a teacher, as a witness to the truth, identified Himself, they have not even leisure to put Pilate's question: "What is truth?"

To these I would make the following appeal. Can you believe that Christ left the testimony which it was the object of His life to give, which was confirmed by the Holy Ghost, and which He commanded His apostles to teach all nations under promise of His abiding presence and that of His Holy Spirit, without guaranteeing the truthfulness, the infallibility, of the teaching body with which He, the God of truth, had identified Himself? But if this be so, the Church's claim to infallibility is itself a note, a necessary note, of the true Church. Whatever may have been the political mistakes of her rulers, however evil the lives of many of her children, the Church of Christ must ever claim with a confidence, which is not arrogance but fidelity, to appropriate to herself her Master's words: "For this was I born, and for this came I unto the world, that I should give testimony to the truth."

II. GOOD FRIDAY

THE SEVEN WORDS ON THE CROSS

I

INTRODUCTION. We are met here this evening to contemplate the last scene of the agony of our Blessed Lord, His Crucifixion, in order that, if never before at least now, by the mercy of God, its lessons may sink into our hearts. You all, even those amongst you who are not Catholics, believe that He Who died upon the Cross on this day was God as well as Man, that He died for each one of us, to save us from our sins and the consequences of those sins—hell. We are all therefore desirous of appreciating in its fullness this supreme act of our Lord's mercy, and of making what return for it we may.

I propose to speak to you of the Seven Words that Christ uttered upon the Cross, the last words uttered upon His death-bed by our Father, by Whom we were all of us begotten unto salvation upon this day.

Our Lord's words were very few during His Passion. He Who had spoken as never man spake, was, as the prophet says, "Like a sheep before its shearers not opening his mouth." Two or three

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

gentle expostulations with His tormentors, a confession of His Divine Sonship when His Father's honour was at stake—but for the rest silence. To Pilate scarcely a word, so that he wondered exceedingly; to Herod not one, so that he mocked Him with his whole army as a fool. There is a time for speaking, and a time for keeping silence; and the Eternal Wisdom had allowed Himself to fall into His enemies' hands, in order to suffer not to speak, and so the few words that He did speak have a startling significance, specially those He spoke from His death-bed, the altar of the Cross—patient and silent between the impatient clamorous thieves.

1. "*Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.*" The chief priests and rulers probably knew that He was the Messiah, but not that He was God; the common people did not know that He was the Messiah, but they knew that He was their benefactor, that He had worked countless miracles in their behalf; in part they knew, in part they did not know. Our Lord's generosity in dwelling upon their ignorance.

All sin implies ignorance in some degree. "Thou fool." "I have compassion on the multitude." Result of this prayer that the destruction of Jerusalem was deferred for forty years. The tradition that all those immediately concerned in the Crucifixion were converted.

2. "*This day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.*" Meanwhile the thieves who were crucified with Him, joining with the crowd below, mocked and blasphemed Him, bidding Him save Himself and them. Poor wretches, stung with pain, with an intense sense of its reality and scorn of unpractical

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

miraculous pretension, perhaps too fawning upon their executioners that they might be the easier with them. But see! as one of them looks more closely upon that patient form in their midst, as his ears perhaps catch the words of the prayer "Father, forgive them," his eyes are opened, and his heart is changed. The stream of ribaldry dies upon his lips. Hear in how changed a voice he speaks, rebuking his companion: "Neither dost thou fear God, seeing thou art under the same condemnation; and we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds, but this man hath done no evil." Then, turning to our Lord: "Remember me, when Thou shalt come into Thy Kingdom." What a confession of faith, what a king, what sort of kingdom? A crown of thorns, a cross, two faithful hearts, Our Lady and St John, at the foot of the Cross, and a crowd of blasphemers, and now this third, a penitent thief. Hear how quickly comes the answer, our Lord's second word instantaneously: "Amen I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." This very day you shall share with Me in the vision of God. It is the more common opinion that this privilege was granted to the penitent thief in Limbo before he had ascended with the other fathers to heaven. How munificent is Christ upon the Cross, if we will seek Him. A cross is prepared for each one of us; sooner or later we shall be fastened upon it; we have well-earned its sufferings by our sins. It is for us to choose whether we hang thereon blaspheming or confessing, whether it is to be the prelude of hell or of paradise.

3. "*Woman, behold thy son; son, behold thy*

mother.” He speaks to those two who are standing nearest to the foot of the cross. First, He gives His beloved disciple to His mother as her child, and in his person He gives all of us. Then He commends His mother to St John, and in his person to all of us. We reverence Our Lady so much because she is the mother of God; we treat with her so constantly and so familiarly because Christ has given her to us to be our mother. “From that hour the disciple took her to his own.” She is ours, and all that we have is hers. Can anyone be surprised that the Catholic Church makes so much of our Blessed Lady after this?

Darkness and silence for the best part of three hours; our High Priest was saying the “secrets” of the Mass.

4. “*My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*” What is this further anguish, so much worse than all else that it alone elicits a complaint, a cry as at something unendurable? Our Lord had taken upon Him the sins of the whole world, and, in harmony with that character, He allowed Himself to be made an outcast from the consolations of the Father and the Holy Ghost. From the first moment of His conception, His human soul, in virtue of the hypostatic union, had enjoyed the beatific vision; during His whole life the absorbing joy of that vision had been restrained in various ways, so that He could really suffer various pains in His body and in the lower part of His soul. In His Passion, and especially at this portion of it, all joy from the vision of God was restrained, so that Christ could experience that most grievous of all abandonments, the abandonment of God.

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

5. "*I thirst.*" And now having appealed to His Heavenly Father, He, it would seem, craves human sympathy, manifesting a most human want: "*I thirst.*" Most simple words, that bare statement of a want, but how pathetic! The God Who planted Eden, causing it to be watered by four fair rivers, Who made water to flow from the rock in the wilderness to quench His people's thirst, is now athirst, and there are none to give Him anything but vinegar and gall. He had good cause for thirst; since His capture on Thursday night He had tasted nothing; He had been dragged through the heat and dust; He was fevered from His scourging, He had lost almost all His blood. The thirst of a battlefield! How this "*I thirst*" must have pierced His mother's heart—she who had been used to anticipate all His wants from earliest childhood, now in His uttermost need cannot help Him, or even so much as moisten those parched lips. But there is more than this in those words "*I thirst.*" Do you not remember, when He sat by the well of Samaria, how He manifested that double thirst of which the one, the material thirst, was only a feeble image of the other, the spiritual thirst, the thirst for souls, for man's salvation, for his love? True, He asked the woman of Samaria to give Him to drink, but it was only to introduce the promise of that water which whoso drinketh shall not thirst for ever. He cares not to taste of what His disciples bring Him; He has other food: "To do His will that sent Me, to perfect His work." "*I thirst*" for souls, for their love, whom I have first loved, laying down My life for them. That cry of love has rung through the

Church of God, and has everywhere, in all ages till now, found the echo in men's hearts. It has drawn thousands to leave all things for Christ, to devote themselves to the salvation of souls, to pour out their blood like water, if so be that Divine thirst might be satisfied. "I thirst." Thousands of innocent young souls, bearing their unspoilt, undefiled lives as in a cup, have presented them to the lips of Christ, and thus have answered that cry. "It is well," "Thou feedest among the lilies." But He is not satisfied. You and I must give Him to drink. Alas! what have we but the dregs of our misspent lives, of which we have poured libations to the world, the flesh, and the devil? Oh, mystery of mysteries, that He should crave the love of such as we are! Is it so much better than gall and vinegar? Nay, the gall and vinegar He would not drink, but our love He thirsts for. Whatever you may have been, only now give Him your love in earnest, and you are His, and He is yours.

6. "*It is finished.*" The great work He came to do, the salvation of the world! We have a work to do by corresponding with the plenteous salvation which Christ has wrought for us. To "work out our salvation." God grant that, when our time of departing comes, we too may be able to say: "It is finished."

7. "*Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit.*" The type of all holy deaths. The perfect confidence because His work is finished. Contrasted with the anguish of the previous abandonment. The loud voice, the Divinity asserting itself over the weakness of dissolution. The absolute calmness of the last step over what seems to mortal eyes

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

a frightful precipice from the rock on which the battle has been waged into the abyss of eternity; but to the good it is nothing less than the loving hands of God.

And now, in conclusion, survey for a moment these seven words we have been contemplating. They express to us in the most marvellous manner God made man in His office of Mediator. Three of the words are addressed to the Eternal Father, three to man, one, "*Consummatum est*," both to His Father and to man. They begin with a sublime act of forgiveness, they end with an act of perfect confidence. In their alternating appeal to God and man, they give us a true picture of the death-bed of a dying man, with all its restlessness, whilst in the sublimity of each lesson as it comes, and in their intrinsic harmony, we read the wisdom and power of the God Whose life and Whose kingdom can have no end. God grant that when we die we may find ourselves with Him in Paradise.

II

1. "*Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.*" Ignorance is a necessary quality in all sin. If we knew the nature of God and our relations with Him perfectly, with such perfection, I mean, as is compatible with our condition here below; if we realised fully what mortal sin is, the full significance of what are called the four last things, Death, Judgment, Hell, and Heaven, we could not commit grievous sin. We are always pleading this ignorance of ours in excuse for our shortcomings;

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

but we do so in a half-hearted way, conscious that after all, our knowledge is quite sufficient to condemn us, that we know enough to make it a duty to know more; that it is not so much that we do not know, as that we do not take to heart what we know. We take the world seriously enough, giving its full value to every event affecting our temporal interests, the rise and fall of the market, the intervention of friends and enemies; but in the things of God, in the great business of our salvation, we are but triflers. If we bestow a thought upon it, it is at long intervals, a moment now and again. We seem to say to ourselves "God can afford to wait." Yes, the eternal God can afford to wait, but can we do so, who at best may command a modicum of time of uncertain length? Somewhere in the line of visitors that approach our gates, as the years pass by, the succession of events that are chronicled day by day, the duties that appeal, the woes that threaten, the pleasures that allure, is the chariot of God's judgment. Its advent will be the last item of our life's chronicle, but the entry will be made in another hand than ours. Once when we were young, we might persuade ourselves that our death was a far off event, although there could be no assurance that such was the case. Now that we are old, we know that it is nigh even at the gates, and yet how ignorant we are, with dim eyes and groping hands and failing hearts, with no accurate knowledge of past or present or of things to come, yet with a sense of sin which pierces us like a sword, and chokes the plea of ignorance in our throat.

And now what we hesitate to say for ourselves

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

our Saviour, our Advocate, says for us: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." It is much to say this of the Jews, for was not the whole of their dispensation a preparation for the coming of the Messiah, and had they not been witnesses of the wonderful works which illustrated our Lord's mission, and had they not listened to the words of One Who, on their own admission, spoke as never man spoke? But it is still more difficult to urge this plea on our behalf, Christians as we are, children of the Catholic Church, who have been taught to stand beneath the cross, and have been illumined and fortified by the Sacraments which have sprung from the fountain of the Precious Blood; and yet for us too, for all of us sinners, our Saviour puts up His audacious plea: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

O Consubstantial Wisdom of the Father, O Word made Flesh, Who even in Thy human nature art wholly wise, it would seem as if in Thy overpowering sympathy with our weak nature which Thou hast assumed, Thou didst mercifully impute as ignorance each degree in which we fall short of Thy perfect wisdom! O Lord we knew not, but now we know, what we have done in crucifying Thee by our sins; yet shall we ever need the merciful shelter of Thy excuse—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

2. "*Amen I say to thee, this day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.*" "And one of the thieves who were hanging, blasphemed Him, saying: If Thou be Christ, save Thyself and us. And the other answering, rebuked him, saying: Neither

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

dost thou fear God, seeing thou art under the same condemnation; and we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this man hath done no evil. And he said to Jesus: Lord, remember me when Thou shalt come into Thy kingdom. And Jesus said to him: Amen I say unto thee, this day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise."

Oh, how can we do justice to such a scene as this? If we might only break the honeycomb, and taste, and see how sweet the Lord is. Try and bring before you the scene of that memorable confession, the gathering darkness, the three agonised figures upon their crosses, Jesus in the midst, and on the one side an angry writhing form with a scoff upon his lips: "If Thou be the Christ, prove Thy title, and let us enjoy a common release." After all, there was nothing extraordinary in the conduct of this poor man. Theirs was indeed a common misery. His anguish did not incline him to make fine distinctions, and to his own disadvantage. He that was hanging in their midst claimed a name, that would leave the remedy in His own hands. Let Him use it, or confess that He has it not. And Jesus held His peace; but a voice on the other side takes up His cause, rebuking his companion, that he did not fear God, and then calmly and clearly discriminates between their case and His. "We indeed justly, for we receive the due recompense of our deeds, but this man hath done no wrong." Thus rises and falls, with the majestic weight and rhythm of an ocean wave, the sinner's *Magnificat*, man justifying God. A glorious act of manhood, for man is made in the image of his Maker,

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

and in nothing so much as in his sense of justice. So far, then, the action of the Good Thief, though necessarily assisted by grace, was substantially human; but see now by what an accession of grace he is uplifted, as though on angels' wings. In the same breath, he cries: "Lord, remember me when Thou art come into Thy kingdom." The Apostles had fled, and were stumbling in half-belief under the strain of their Master's capture; and now this man, amid the darkness and the anguish of Calvary, attains by one transcendent act of faith to the conception of a king and a conqueror, in the person of his dying Saviour, crowned with thorns, enthroned upon a cross, and in the shadow of imminent death. Ah, happy thief! the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and thou hast risen from the abyss of earthly frustration and taken it by storm. Thou hast appealed directly to the Sacred Heart: "Lord, remember me." "Though a mother should forget her child, yet will I not forget thee," so spake God by the mouth of His prophet. If Job, in his argument with God, could not answer one for a thousand, still less in the interchange of love could the Sacred Heart fail to respond a thousand for one, to the penitent heart which challenged It. At once the answer comes, so brief and so frankly absolute: "Amen, I say unto thee, this day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." At once, with Me; as we were one in the condemnation of men, so are we one in the glory of My kingdom: all that is Mine is thine for ever. It has been curiously asked, where was the Good Thief's soul before our Lord's Ascension? What matters it, he was with Christ,

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

and to be with Christ is Paradise. I cannot but believe that these words were a Divine anæsthetic, and that the rest of the Crucifixion, along with the cruel breaking of the limbs, were matters to which the Good Thief was wholly indifferent.

The same generous heart is open to all of us. The more afflicted we are, the more welcome shall we be. If you are suffering an intolerable loss, nay, if you are burdened with the burden of a life-long sin, if you can but breathe the acknowledgment: "we indeed justly," and throw yourself upon the mercy of the Sacred Heart, "Lord, remember me," you shall receive nothing less than the answer: "This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise."

3. *When therefore Jesus had seen His mother and the disciple whom He loved, standing, He saith to His mother: "Woman, behold thy son." Then He saith to His disciple: "Son, behold thy mother."* Lo, He has given us all things. He has come in the form of a servant, being the Lord of all, and not content with a life in our service, and a death for our salvation, He must needs make us free with that, which even the most generous benefactor retains for himself, the tender intimate relations of His home—His mother! How often a man will be free of his own person in any sort of company, but when it comes to bringing people home, he is carefully fastidious. When Christ took upon Himself our human nature, He also made a home for Himself in which He spent thirty years of His life, in the society of His mother, and His foster-father. It was His own private walled garden, in which He delighted Himself, the centre of human intercourse

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

that was the most congenial to the Incarnate God. We are not told, by authority, of any who shared it with Him, in any degree, though of course there were points of contact with the outer world. But when He came to die, He would show us that all that He had done was for ourselves. He chose His mother not only for Himself, but for us. He cherished her as the apple of His eye, as His very own, that we might prize her the more when ours. The third time He opened His lips upon the cross, it was to give us to her, and her to us, in the person of St John. A sad exchange, as St Bernard remarks, "the son of Zebedee for the Son of God," but St John was at least the beloved disciple, and did her filial service to her life's end. But what are we to say to the mixed company of all the children of men, who are commended to her maternal arms? What have we ever done for her, a few saints apart, except give her endless trouble, which is worst of all, when we pretend that we will not trouble her, because we are so careless about the things that are for our peace? Protestants are haunted with the notion that somehow we put her in the place of her Son, as though she represented a closed, not an open, door; as though she met the penitent who desired an audience of His Saviour, with the words: "He is busy and angry, but I will listen to you, if you like." As though she had any thought but to bring us to His feet, or any thought, but that the interposition of one who is at once His mother and ours, might give us confidence. What is Mary but a creation of God's love of us? What has she, that she has not received? What have we that we have not received through her?

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

4. *And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice* ELOI, ELOI, *lamma sabacthani, which is interpreted, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me.* It is hard to speak as one ought on this word. One seems to hear the very accents of despair from the lips of Him Who has so wonderfully established us in hope. A like note, though less deep and personal, one is familiar with in the Psalter, that lyre of many strings, upon which the Spirit of God teaches the Church to pour out her heart before God. The motive is the same. Christ would anticipate the last resort of our misery, before it crystallises into despair. He can afford to use words, nay to entertain emotions, which we dare not. His Almighty wings suffer Him to descend deeper into the abyss than we, so that He may bear us up, for He, the sinless one, knows, as no one else can know, what the burden of sin is. For upon Him has been laid the burden of us all. He knows how nigh unto final despair and the undying worm the sinner's soul may come, in the presence of a wasted life and imminent judgment, and He gives the sentiment its full volume of expression, nay its characteristic exaggeration, that the sinner may not feel that he is alone, or lost beyond recovery. "If I go up into heaven Thou art there. If I go down into hell, Thou art present. If I take wing very early in the morning, and dwell in the uttermost part of the sea, even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand hold me." St Francis Borgia, when meditating upon the Last Supper, and wishing to put himself in spirit in the lowest place, bethought himself of the feet of Judas, but that place was

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

already taken, for at the traitor's feet he found Jesus. Thus in order to preoccupy the last stage of our despair, and to prevent the suicide of the soul, we find our Saviour desolate and forsaken, so as to make common cause with us, in His invincible love.

“Recordare Jesu pie
Quod sum causa tuæ viæ
Ne me perdas illa die.”

5. *I thirst.* A most human cry, expressing one of the common wants of our nature, which comes home to us all. Honest hunger and thirst, if certainly honest, will arrest the most indifferent. On the battlefield the cry for water from a wounded enemy brings us at once to his assistance, and we forget everything about him, except that he is a thirsty fellow-creature, continuing to do this, even when we had learned the risk it may be to ourselves. Jesus had been undergoing a torment of many hours; His blood had been drained from His body, and He had been hung up to parch and wither upon the cross. His mouth and throat were choked with blood and dust. His tongue was beginning to cleave to His palate. Surely His most bitter enemy could not grudge Him a mouthful of water to moisten His lips, and so because He was verily athirst, and because too He would give His tormentors an opportunity to vindicate their humanity, He said: “I thirst,” and they gave Him vinegar. But this material thirst was but a feeble expression of a spiritual thirst, that had consumed Him throughout His life, and now when He is dying, with a yet more fiery intensity—a thirst for

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

the salvation of souls, for the salvation of sinners, if but sinners would allow themselves to be saved: a thirst for our love, for in that love is our salvation. An unrestricted thirst for the love of us all, not of saints merely, or of religious, or of innocent children, not of the young merely, and the amiable, but of the old, the sour, the disagreeable. We are told that there is a certain terrible desert passage, on which the Arab travellers, besides their common stock, carry each one in his bosom a small bottle of water for his own extremity; and this none may ask of the other, under any circumstances whatever, nor wife of husband, nor child of mother. Before the time for its use comes, it is often a warm and turbid mouthful, yet it is the one precious last property, to be shared with no one. It is this which Christ asks of us. It is in itself so paltry that we blush to offer it, but relatively it is so precious, because it is all we have. We aged sinners, whose lives are almost spent, have nothing else to offer. It is what no one can offer but ourselves, and He wants it. "I thirst" is an individual appeal to each one of us. "If thou didst know the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee give me to drink, thou wouldst have perhaps asked of Him, and He would have given thee the water of life." Give Him what He asks. Do not present to those craving lips the vinegar of thy despair.

6. *It is finished.* The great work which Christ came upon earth to do, the work of our redemption, is completed. God and man are reconciled. In all things He had fulfilled His Father's will, reversing the tradition of disobedience, nailing the writ of condemnation that was against us to His cross.

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

The greatest of all works in its results, in the difficulty of its achievement, and in its completeness. How few are the works intellectual, social, political, of whatever character they may be, concerning which their author may say that they are complete; that there is nothing more left to be done. "He began to build, and he could not finish," may be safely engraved upon the most important and enduring and excellent of the works of man's industry and art.

We leave our work, such as it is, to those who come after us, with no assurance that it will be completed, no guarantee that it will not be reversed and destroyed. So far as its intention is pure, and it is honestly subordinated to the work which Christ has consummated, it will not be thrown away, however imperfect; neither will it lose its reward. The work we can do, is at best small enough. The night cometh when no man can work. God grant that it be of that sort, that when we have perforce to stop, it may not be as with those who have collected treasures in a dream, of whom the Psalmist says, that when they wake, they find nothing at all of it in their hands.

7. "*Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit.*" Such is the peaceful close of our Lord's crucifixion, of its agonising effort, of its discords, as they seem to us. Every preceding word, as it emphasises the varying pulsations of the Sacred Heart, leads up to the final harmony, in which every discord finds its solution, and He Who shuddered in His abandonment, with the bitter cry: "My God, my God," falls asleep like a tired child, upon its mother's breast, in supreme assurance.

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

Ah, if only after life's fitful fever, and death's rude assault, it might be so with us! Generous forgiveness, patient service carried out to the last—the cup of prescribed suffering drained to the last dregs, even to the withdrawal of all the sensible consolation appertaining to the sense of obedience; the ruling passion, the love of souls, still strengthening in death, issues in the absolute peace that belongs to God's perfect love.

“Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit.” These words have been handed down in the Christian Church as the form which makes death a Sacrament, the last act of obedience which is its own reward, in that it gathers within itself, all the blessings that heart can desire, the possession of God for all eternity.

Bow, then, Thy head, O Saviour of the world, consenting to Thy death as once to the baptism of John, “for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.” For the thorns with which sinners have crowned Thee, receive the crown of justice with which Thou art crowned King of Kings, Lord of Lords, and Father of the world to come. Let thy servant lift Thee down from the cross, and, after a brief repose, encircled in Mary's loving arms, let them lay Thee in Thy garden tomb, until the moment of Thy glorious Resurrection. And then, as Thou comest to Thy kingdom, remember us, and lift us up with Thee, to a new and better life, for we have stood beneath the cross, upon which our sins have raised Thee, and we are resolved never to sin again, but so to live that when our time has come, we may relinquish life as Thou didst, commending our spirit into our Father's hands.

C.—EASTER TO PENTECOST

I. EASTER SUNDAY

THE ANGELS ON THE FIRST EASTER DAY

“Fear not you : for I know that you seek Jesus Who was crucified.”—*St Matt.* xxviii. 5.

WORDS of encouragement, spoken to the holy women by the great angel of the Resurrection whose countenance was as lightning, and his raiment as snow—for fear of whom the guards were struck with terror, and became as dead men.

Think of the repression of the Holy Angels during the Passion—to look on inactive—the momentary vain hope inspired by our Lord’s words : “Thinkest thou that I cannot ask My Father, and He will give Me more than twelve legions of angels.” The one office allowed—the Angel in the Garden—what a task to console the Consoler, to assist in a Divine agony, more trying than that of St John the Baptist, who had to baptise Him by Whom he would fain be baptised.

But now at length the word is given, not of vengeance indeed, but of triumph over the enemies of Christ, and the Angel descends from heaven, and there is a great earthquake, and he rolls away the stone, and sits thereon. What a magnificent energy, and how little there was after all for him

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

to do! He could but symbolise Christ's victory, for the Resurrection was complete before the stone was rolled away. Think what his face must have said to the trembling guards who withered away before its brightness!

But on the other hand how *debonair*, to use an old word, how gentle, how tender, he is with the holy women! "Fear not *you*, for I know that you seek Jesus Who was crucified."

How considerate, not hurrying them on their mission to the Apostles, but giving them time to recover themselves, and indulgent to their pious curiosity, inviting them to come and see the place where the Lord was laid. The Tabernacle was empty, but still it was the Tabernacle where for a space their Lord had rested. Thus early did Christian women begin to concern themselves for the interests of the Sanctuary.

And then, as they turned away to fulfil the Angel's bidding, behold Jesus met them, saying: "All hail," "but they came up and took hold of His feet and adored Him."

Would that we could all be present in spirit in that Garden, grey with dew in the very early morning of that first Sunday. Nature herself, full of the prophecies of new life in her dawn and springtide, a fit accompaniment to the great triumph of life over death and decay, in the Resurrection of her Lord and Master.

Hitherto the victory had lain with death. The end of all earthly greatness, the "*hic jacet*": but now the finality of death is repudiated, and it is stamped as a mere interval between two lives, and the second life eternal. Now it is as though there

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

were a wall between Him and us, not shutting Him in, but shutting us out. The beautiful external nature which speaks to us of Him is empty of His visible presence, the sky which received Him out of our sight yields Him not again.

But we know that at His last coming, as at His Resurrection, there will be a ministry of Angels, gathering His elect from the four corners of the earth, and sifting the wheat from the chaff. And the earth will quake, and the heavens be moved, and men shall wither away for dread.

Ah, if amid the trumpets and the voices we might but hear the comforting sympathetic words of one of God's mighty ones making common cause with us: "Fear not you, for I know that you seek Jesus Who was crucified"; and so encouraged may indeed lay hold of His feet and worship Him. Ah, it will be so with some, a realisation of that gracious picture of Fra Angelico, in which the holy dead are rising from their graves embraced by Angels. But how will it be with us? It all turns upon this: whom are we seeking? Are we seeking Jesus Who was crucified? It is the one condition of not fearing, for love casteth out fear. But if, instead of seeking the Crucified One, we have been merely guarding His tomb, recognising Him in some dim distant way as one who is not to be disturbed lest His claims upon us should become active and importunate—if we would sooner have a dead Christ Whose work is done and over, than a living Christ Whose kingdom is ever present and everlasting—then indeed we can have no part in the joy of the Resurrection, but we must needs wither away for fear, and the good thoughts which beset even the

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

worst of us at this holy season shall be tormenting memories of promise unfulfilled, of a springtide without harvest, of a dawn swallowed up in darkness e'er it reached the perfect day.

We must seek Him that was crucified; we cannot ever have Him wholly apart from His Passion; even in His glorified Body He retains the print of the wounds to teach us this lesson; in His death we must die to sin, if in His Resurrection we are really to rise to a new life.

This is indeed a season of great joy in which we must needs rejoice, yet is it still an anxious joy; the Alleluia trembles on our lips; only in God's eternal Sabbath can it realise its perfect tone of peaceful assurance, for who can say to himself with perfect confidence: "Fear not you, for I know that you seek Jesus Who was crucified." "If you really seek Me, if you love Me," our Master says, "keep My commandments."

But neither must we think that these words of welcome and comfort are addressed to the just and holy only; even the Apostles had forsaken their Master, and St Peter had denied Him, and it is the tradition of the Church that many of those who had taken an active part in the Crucifixion obtained the grace of conversion. Neither was it the treason of Judas that put him beyond the pale of mercy, but the obstinate despair with which he blasphemed God's infinite mercy. Sinners that we are, though our hands have helped to nail Him to the Cross, we may still seek and find Jesus Who was crucified, and lay hold of His feet by faith and hope and the preludes at least of charity; though we have by our long-standing evil habits bound the will He made

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

free, in the chains of death, yet are we not so wholly dead but that in Him, the Lord of Life, Who has burst asunder the chains of death, we have the possibility of living. Hope in Him, seek Him, and you shall have life, and yet more abundant life; for the death of sin you shall have the life of grace, which shall issue in the life of glory. You shall live and you shall not die; and if you are dead and buried in your sin, hear Him by the mouth of His prophet (Ezech. xxxvii. 12-14): "Thus saith the Lord God: Behold I will open your graves, and will bring you out of your sepulchres, O My people: and will bring you into the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall have opened your sepulchres, and shall have brought you out of your graves, O My people: and shall have put My spirit in you, and you shall live, and I shall make you rest upon your own land: and you shall know that I the Lord have spoken, and done it, saith the Lord God."

2. LOW SUNDAY

THE DECAY OF FAITH

“ Jesus saith to him : Because thou hast seen Me, Thomas, thou hast believed ; blessed are they who have not seen, and have believed.

“ These things have been written that ye may believe, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God ; and that believing, ye may have life in His name.”—*St John* xx. 29, 31.

OUR Lord's manifestations to His disciples of His Resurrection were sporadic ; I mean, they were fragmentary and occasional, not formal and complete, though they tended to be so in the last developments. At first He appeared to the Holy Women, then to the two disciples when on the road to Emmaus, then to the Apostles *minus* St Thomas, then to the whole body of Apostles including St Thomas, as recorded in the passage from which the text is taken, then to St Peter and St John and the rest who went fishing, then just previous to and at His Ascension.

Each of those who had been so favoured contributed their quota of evidence, and it was hard for those as yet not so favoured to accept it.

Sometimes the sentiment was nothing less than dread, as it was with Cleophas and his companion —“ Certain of our women terrified us ”—or of

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

sturdy unbelief like St Thomas—"unless I can see and feel for myself, I will not believe."

Even in the day so to speak of seeing, faith was demanded; they were expected to believe in one another. Human faith was required as the vehicle and conduit of Divine faith.

Faith, taken in its integrity with what are called its preambles, is a social virtue; not only in order that it should justify must it issue in charity, but it is itself founded in charity. We accept what is delivered to us by the holy men of old, by the Church, with whose holy ordinances we are familiar, and whom we love as our mother, and it is in these domestic relations that the union of faith is consummated, and God manifests Himself to us as the truth which can neither deceive nor be deceived.

Here, in the economy of faith, is true what was said in the beginning: "It is not good for man to be alone." St Thomas is reproached because he did not believe on the report of his brethren, and our Lord teaches the travellers to Emmaus "beginning with Moses and all the prophets." Tradition and authority, solidarity with the Church of the past and with the Church of the present—this is the normal condition of a saving faith, a faith which gives an assurance of solidarity with the Church of the future, the heavenly Jerusalem.

It was this breach with the Church of the present and the Church of the past that constituted the unforgivable sin of the so-called reformers of the sixteenth century. They thought indeed that they might preserve a relation with the Church of the past, the primitive Church, whilst consummating

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

their breach with the Church of the present. But in reality, in arrogating the right of interpreting for themselves Scripture and tradition—such fragmentary tradition as they chose to retain—they isolated themselves, and aimed at exercising faith each one by himself, Bible in hand. This was not provided for in the dispensation of Providence, and the consequence has been that as a whole the faith of Protestants has issued in rationalism. I am not referring merely to the falling away of individuals, or even of masses, but to the rationalism of accredited teachers.

Protestants attempted to justify their breaking off from us in the sixteenth century on the ground of our supposed obscuration of certain precious truths, e.g., the supremacy of Christ by the *cultus* of our Lady and the Saints, the reality of Hell by Purgatory, the Divine Inspiration of Scripture by Tradition. I would ask, where do these doctrines, which we were accused of neglecting, as we contend so unjustly, flourish most at this moment? Amongst us, or amongst the children of the Reformation? When Protestants left us, they certainly held, nay, brandished in our faces, these doctrines with great demonstrativeness. They were flowers which were to shine so brightly when once withdrawn from the cold shadow of usurping authority and the rank overgrowths of superstition. If, as the world confesses, it is precisely these doctrines that everywhere amongst Protestants have grown faint and confused, we must admit that in the separation from the Church these doctrines of faith have been torn from their root, or at least have been deprived of

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

the conditions necessary for their normal well-being.

So much has this been felt, that we have become familiar in this country with an important section of the Anglican Establishment which never wearies of insisting that they are one, that they must be one, with the Pre-Reformation Church which they dispossessed, of which extravagance it may be sufficient to say that it has been unable to command the serious attention of any outside its formal partisans, seeing that by no imaginative act, however sympathetic, is a man capable of selecting his past.

I have said that faith in its normal condition is a social virtue. It is from ignoring this that the young who leave their homes, and go out into the world, often lose their faith; sometimes it is a case of suspended animation, sometimes it is nothing less than death. They have not made the effort necessary in their altered circumstances, in the cessation of home-observance, to keep in touch with the Church. They no longer frequent her services; just at first they do not go so far as to omit anything that is of strict obligation, but the monthly communions cease, and they keep no account of festivals of devotion, or of Benediction. They have no notion of abandoning the faith; they know that logically faith is independent of such practices, but they forget what I may call the physiology of faith, as though it were sufficient for a plant that its roots should be intact if these are in the air and not in the soil.

Then they come across companions who are non-Catholics, who have put away frankly such

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

religious tenets as they were brought up in, almost as a matter of course, as though they appertained only to children; and, as in other things, these young Catholics use the privileges of their adolescence, and glory in learning to become independent, so are they fain to do in religious matters also. They finally persuade themselves that after all faith is a private personal matter, in the sense that they must see and feel for themselves. They are attracted by the free and easy garments of their companions, which present every variety from an emphasised nakedness to the broad phylacteries of the east; and they learn to be ashamed of what they are persuaded is a somewhat stiff uniform. Indeed a uniform when isolated in a crowd cannot but look somewhat out of place. They are persuaded that in thus standing by themselves and in neglecting all assumptions, however sanctioned, they are adopting a scientific position, as though there was ever a science which did not make demands upon the faith of its students, or in which a persistent demand for individual verifications of detail would not have imposed a bar to serious progress.

Such persons, by the isolation to which they have submitted themselves, if they have not made faith impossible, have at least made it very difficult; they have lost the collateral support which they would have found in Catholic association, in the company of the Church on earth, and of the Saints in heaven, in a sense of the length and breadth and height and depth of the Divine economy, in a realisation of the conduct of God's people throughout the record of the Old and New

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

Testament, and in the history of the Church from the Acts of the Apostles to the last chapter of the chronicle of to-day.

We believe that Christ rose from the dead. Our risen Saviour is the supreme object at once of our faith, our hope, and our love. Let us bear in mind that, as members of the Catholic Church, we have this faith and hope and love in common, that in this respect we minister to and support each other. Let us pray every day of our lives that whatever we may lose, we may never lose that union upon which so much depends, and the blessing of those who have not seen and have believed will rest upon us. "These things have been written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and that believing ye may have life in His name."

3. SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

THE TRANSFORMATION OF DEATH

“Fear not, I am the first and the last, and alive, and was dead, and behold I am living for ever and ever, and have the keys of death and of hell.”—*Apoc.* i. 17, 18.

WHAT can I say to you that shall be in any sense fresh and new upon the old familiar theme of Easter Joy?

It is only the thought of the inexhaustible freshness of the theme itself that encourages me. This can never really wax old, for it lies so largely in its promise, which for us is not yet fulfilled. How can spring-water ever seem dull and insipid to really thirsty lips, and are not we all athirst for life and joy? We cannot acquiesce in death, or in a wretched life which is but death's prelude.

And indeed in the natural order how has death tyrannised over all below, how complete is his victory! Within how brief a span is the energy of the most active redundant life confined!

The happiest, the fullest of lives is marked by a catena of graves, in which, one by one, all its joys are buried, in the last of which it hides itself, and is seen no more. The recurrent energy of life in the material world, the return of the dawn and

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

the springtide, do but mock the lost energies of man's mind and body, which are lost and do not return.

It is impossible to exaggerate the triumphant finality of death, as far as this world goes: the dead man's place knows him no more, and his memory becomes a dim and distant thing which though of him, is no longer his.

Children are afraid of ghosts; they shudder at the darkness which seems to them alive with all that has vanished into it; for us, the middle-aged and the old, it is the dead pulseless darkness which is so ghastly, for it yields no answer to our cry, no echo even, whilst hour by hour it swallows up all the light of our lives, and as yet yields no glimmer, no suggestion of another dawn. Well might the heathen, in view of the shortness of life and the inexorable character of death, engrave upon his friend's tombstone the inscription "*Ave atque vale*," "Hail and farewell," recognising, as it were, in one breath the coming and the going, and bidding a farewell for ever.

Of all the great powers of nature which the heathen recognised as gods, to Death alone no altar was raised, because it was irresistible and inexorable, the universal conqueror, knowing neither pity nor remorse.

The joy of Easter is the joy of victory over death. Christ dies, and rises again, and thereby the finality of death is destroyed, the everlasting prison-house becomes a tiring-room, where the garments of time are exchanged for the robes of eternity, and the tyrannical destroyer of the pleasures of life becomes for all true Christians the

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

angel who introduces them into the joy of their Lord. Nay, for us, if we make truly our own the Joy of the Resurrection, there shall be no death, nothing that deserves the name: "Amen, I say unto you, if anyone keep My word, he shall not see death for ever." There shall be no second death, and for the soul there need not be even a moment's hindrance from the enjoyment of everlasting life.

And so let us drink of this cordial which our Saviour offers us, and let us pledge one another therein. He did not refuse to drink the bitter cup of His Passion to the dregs, in order that He might give us this new wine of eternal life.

"If any one keep My word, he shall not see death for ever." Now the fulfilment of the law is Love, for God is Love. If you would not see death, but live for ever, love God. Love is the great principle of life, and there is no love that is stable apart from the love of God. When God wholly withdraws Himself from His creature, so that the reflection of His countenance no longer falls upon it, and the creature is no longer capable of being an object of love, its beauty perishes, as colour perishes when the light is withdrawn. If you would live for ever, love the Eternal.

Even now you are necessarily attracted towards Him, when you least know it. The one lovable point in yourself and others is the image of God; when this is hopelessly obscured, love must cease. The love of God is light, and life, and joy. It is the secret of eternal youth, the spirit of the Resurrection. It is the spirit that enables us to fight against the lethargy of sin, the dead con-

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

ventionality of evil habits in which, to so large an extent, our life has become stereotyped, the beginning and promise of death.

The spirit of the Resurrection is the spirit of an invincible hope in a new Creation, in which the rough places shall be made smooth, and the crooked paths straight, that the way of the Lord may be prepared, in which a boundless trust in our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier confidently gainsays the dull and cramping experience of years.

“ I am the Resurrection and the Life,” our Lord said to Martha; “ he that believeth in Me, although he be dead shall live, and everyone that liveth and believeth in Me shall not die for ever; believest thou this? ” Yes, we believe, but we realise so imperfectly, and this because our love is so imperfect, so unstable, and we are cowed with the images of death which surround us. We must lift up our hearts, and bear ourselves as befits the company of Him Who has overcome death.

Death after all is a process, not a state. The dead, unless indeed they are the prey of the second death which is hell, are emphatically the living. Christ says the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is the God of the living, not of the dead; therefore Abraham and the prophets are alive, whereas the Jews, who rejected Christ, asked Him: “ Art Thou greater than our Father Abraham who is dead, and the prophets are dead? ”; thus in strong contrast stands the Christian and unchristian view of life.

Only love God, and the love of God shall cast out fear, even the fear of death; and it will teach

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

you, by an ever new energy of soul, to give the lie to the creeping death of old age, the *tædium vitæ*, at least to repel it from the soul's citadel.

* Let us come near to our Risen Saviour, in order that we may be taught of God. We are dull and distracted, we have no appetite for the things of God, and in our shame that this should be so, we are tempted to forsake His company, even after we have found out that all else is barren. Listen to an audacious word of advice spoken by a great master of the spiritual life: "If God wearies you, do not go away, but tell Him so." It is related in the Life of M. Emery, the holy Superior of St Sulpice during the French Revolution, that, though one of the busiest of men in France, it was his standing order that, when any one of his young students felt wearied or bored, he might knock at his door with the announcement. "*Mon Père, je m'ennuie*," "Father, I am bored," and at once the old man would leave off what he was doing, and devote himself to the entertainment of his visitor, until the weary fit had passed.

I am convinced that Almighty God would do as much for us, did we give Him the opportunity; e'er He let one such go uncomforted, He would exhaust the resources of His Infinity.

There was one our Lord left behind upon earth more dear to Him than all the rest of the world. Surely one might have thought that, having stood at the foot of the Cross, and received her Son in her arms, and being crowned Queen of Sorrows, Mary's mission upon earth was ended; that she, having taken her share in the joy of the Resurrection, was to ascend in triumph with her Son. But

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

no; whilst patriarchs and prophets form the triumphant *cortège* of their now risen Saviour, she, His mother, remains standing, looking up into heaven. Is not this another sorrow added to her seven? Nay, her sorrow is over, overwhelmed for ever in the joy of the Resurrection; if she is still the mother of sorrows, the sorrows are ours. During those last years of her sojourn upon earth, her heart is full of the Resurrection; she is the mother of fair love, and hope, and holy joy—a secret shrine at which apostle and confessor may replenish his lamp. She will teach us how to trim our lamp, how to store in our hearts the oil of gladness, that Christ having risen in our hearts, He may die no more.

In memory of His Resurrection Who rose very early in the morning, let us ourselves rise early, and begin the day with some real intercourse with Him, call it prayer, or meditation, or what not.

The early spring morning, the garden grey with dew as the scene of Christ's Resurrection and the promise of our own, shall no longer flout us with its dreadful contrast to our own hopeless decay, but shall be the welcome emblem of the happy moment when this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and we shall again possess our dead alive for ever, in virtue of Him Who was dead and is alive.

“*Expecto resurrectionem mortuorum*,” “I am looking for the Resurrection of the dead.” Musicians, when they come to this phrase in the *Credo*, are apt to dramatise it with much quaint *tremolo*, as though it contained a ghastly suggestion of fear, instead of the satisfaction of an uncon-

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

trollable longing. Whereas it forms but one phrase with the words succeeding it: "*Expecto resurrectionem mortuorum et vitam venturi sæculi*," "I am looking for the Resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come." The old and the new, the old things made new, the composure of evening and the freshness of morning, woven into one eternal day, which hours no more offend eternity's complete possession, instead of the weary interchange of loss and gain, by which time's victims are tormented, when nothing is, but only has been, or is to be.

To men generally, the world to come is the world of shadows, to us it is the world of realities. We have better learned, I would trust, the great lesson that greets us at our Church door, where the passage of one¹ we have loved and revered, is recorded: "*ex umbris et imaginibus in veritatem*," "from shadows and images into truth."² This is the sequence of being presented to us, the passage from imperfect but obstinately hopeful progressive life, through death, to life true and perfect. "And in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks one like to the Son of Man saith: 'Fear not, I am the first and the last, and alive, and was dead, and behold I am living for ever and ever, and have the keys of death and of hell.'"

¹ Cardinal Newman.

² This is the inscription on the tablet to the memory of Cardinal Newman in the cloister of the Church of the Oratory, Birmingham.

4. THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY

“Thy dead men shall live, my slain shall rise again : Awake, and give praise, ye that dwell in the dust : for thy dew is the dew of the morning, and the land of the giants thou shalt pull down into ruin.”—*Is.* xxvi. 19.

IT has been a prevailing note from Pagan times even to our own, that whereas the plants that die down in winter and disappear, renew their life in the spring, for man when he dies and is laid in the earth, there is no period of recovery, the recurrence of the seasons affects him not, neither the sunshine nor the rain, neither tears nor forgetfulness. And yet we at least know that in truth this is not so, that even as regards the body, the less important half of the human being, although in the disintegration of its absolute sleep it remains without sensible response to the petty recurrence of days and years, yet slowly and securely, as befits the inauguration of an eternal life, the fullness of its time is orbiting itself. Alas, we watch the second-hand of the dial which beats out our trivial span of life and tells us nothing, and we do not see the great hour of God accomplishing itself, of which we are told that even now it is the last hour.

In the words of the text, according to our

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

Catholic commentators, we have God Himself confirming His prophet in the promise and praise of immortality: "My slain shall rise again."

Primarily this refers to our Blessed Lord and His martyrs, to those who have shed their blood for God's cause, but it also applies to all who have died in the Lord, who have resigned cheerfully and patiently into His hands at the first expression of His Will the cup of life, whether this be nearly emptied, or had but just approached their eager lips.

The world is full of pity for those who die young, before they have had their will with life—as though, alas, anyone ever had his will of it. But we know that, whether early or late, it is always well when the Master sends for us, and even apart from religious motive an aged poet of our own day could sing:

"Is it not better at an early hour

In its calm cell to rest the weary head,
While birds are singing and while blooms the bower,
Than sit the fire out, and go starved to bed?"

"Awake and give praise, ye that dwell in the dust, for thy dew is the dew of the morning, and the earth shall yield up her dead."

The dew represents the secret operation of God by which gradually corruption putteth on incorruption. The earthly body that, to use the Scripture expression, was sown, is transformed into the spiritual body which is to rise again, assuredly as spring succeeds winter, and the fair plants that have died down and disappeared burst forth in new and splendid life. So shall it be when

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

God's everlasting spring shall have come, which will be spring still in its abiding freshness, when it has taken to itself the maturity of summer and the abundance of autumn, and the winter of death shall have perished for ever. Then shall those who dwell in the dust, awake and rejoice, and the earth shall yield up her dead, and shall no longer suffer the reproach of barrenness in respect to her noblest seed.

And when will these things be? Many centuries may perchance intervene, but practically we are separated from them by the interval of our own life only, for "with God a thousand years are as one day." In eternity its preludes, which to those standing without may be so tedious, are as naught.

You may complain that all this talk of death imports too sad an element into our thoughts at this time: Easter, you will say, should be all joy, and steeped in the clear colours of the dawn. I should wish it indeed to be all joy. But in speaking of the Resurrection, how can we banish the thought of death, seeing that between our present life and our resurrection death must needs intervene? Believe me, it is not by banishing the thought of death that we can enforce cheerfulness, but rather by making the thought of death a familiar household thought, as is suggested by the Catholic practice of appending to the grace after meals the commemoration of the faithful departed. St Francis of Assisi, one of the most joyful of the servants of God, in his exquisite poem, in which he praises God for the sun, and moon, and water, and fire, and earth, concludes with a stanza for his

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

sister, the death of the body, from whom no living man may escape.

The Resurrection of our Lord is no doubt a triumph for us over death, involving a conversion of the grim and ghastly form of the king of terrors into one of God's angels, and not the least compassionate among them. But its tremendous reality remains intact and uncontrolled. Regarded as anything short of our own death so commonplace an occurrence, such an old story however pathetic, with the slight substitution viewed dramatically of ourself as hero or heroine, so tragic, so appalling, so altogether unique and unexampled. It is a part for which we should prepare ourselves carefully, the labour of which we may to a great extent anticipate. So in the light of our Lord's Resurrection we may contemplate death, as indeed it is, not so properly as an end of life, but as an interlude between two lives.

Let us live in close intercourse not merely with the Church upon earth, but with the Church Triumphant and the Church Suffering, and we shall find that death which is the link between this Life and the Life to come is not a thought to shrink from.

Death should not be treated as a stranger. It has been intimate with so many of our dearest friends. Bossuet, who attended the Princess Henrietta of England on her death-bed, has left on record that she received her death as she received her visitors, with gracious kindness. That we may so entertain him both in expectation and reality is the Easter blessing that I would desire for myself and you.

5. FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

THE PASSAGE OF TIME

“A little while, and now you shall not see Me; and again a little while, and you shall see Me: because I go to the Father. Then some of His disciples said one to another: What is this that He saith to us: A little while, and you shall not see Me; and again a little while, and you shall see Me, and because I go to the Father? They said therefore: What is this that He saith, A little while? we know not what He speaketh.”

—*St John xvi. 16-18.*

1. A little while, the time I am to be with you upon earth. 2. A little while, the time until you are with Me for ever in heaven. 3. A little while—we know not what He speaketh.

1. The judgment pronounced upon the shortness of this life. “Little children, it is the last hour.”

2. Its use as a topic of consolation. (The Apocalypse—as to what is to come quickly.) Our Lord’s treatment of time. He habitually makes nothing of it, as when He speaks of the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world in one breath, as though they were synchronous. This is an exception to His usual habit, condescending to us in His speech, using our language rather than

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

His. He speaks of time as the God of Eternity, rather than as the man of time. A little while. Those who have life before them, or think they have it before them, the young, count it long; but to the old, nay, to those who have passed the first stage, it begins to seem short. It begins to show that it can annihilate itself; past time is not, it is but a faint aroma of sweetness or of bitterness, clinging about the present.

The curious contradiction exhibited by the world—its business and its laying up for the morrow, as contrasted with its sentiment as exhibited in its novels and poetry, the very burden of which is “a little while.” The world’s temperament shown in its feverish alternations of work and play, and its profound melancholy.

The very rivers of Babylon murmur of the shortness of time, and yet the dwellers on their banks live as though they had an abiding dwelling-place.

St Augustine, commenting on the 136th Psalm, says the rivers of Babylon are those things which here are loved and pass away. Everything and everybody that can win our affections is passing away. Let a man, even before old age has come upon him, visit the scenes of his youth, and he will find he is staring into empty picture frames, from which the pictures have been torn.

Something so dreadful and so uncongenial to us in this incessant flux. “*O Sancta Sion, ubi totum stat et nihil fluit.*” This complaint is common to all, saints and sinners, the burden of all pathetic music, that man is born, and grows up, and dies, and his place knows him no more. (Wisdom v.)

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

And now, how does our Lord use this topic, the shortness of time? as one of grief? no, of consolation. Soon this life of exile will be over: "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man shall take from you."

What we should feel, if we were innocent. (Story of young man just entering life who is told he must die.)

We must be contented to work and to suffer for a little while. (2 Cor. vi. 10.) But even in this life Christ's friends fare best. They are "as it were sorrowful, yet always rejoicing." St Augustine bids us notice the *quasi*, "as it were" sorrowful; not real sorrow, for the love of God robs it of most of its sting and of all its poison. But the joy is real and solid; there is no *quasi*; it is the beginning of the joy of heaven. Thus it is that the saints, not the saints in heaven but the saints on earth, are so much happier than we are.

And now it remains for me to say once more, to insist to you upon what both the Church and the world have been saying to you ever since you were born, that you have a work to do, and that you have not much time to do it in. *Modicum tempus*, a little while—whether the thought is comforting or distressing, it is true. You must deal with it; you may either treat it as the ancients did as a mere topic for enjoyment for the present, or simply shut it out till it breaks in, in death's company, like the ordinary man of the world whose studious carelessness looks almost as complete as the natural carelessness of the beast grazing in the butcher's paddock, knowing nothing of death till he dies; or we may entertain the thought and make

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

it part of our everyday life and the motive of our action, praying to our Lord that we learn more and more to love the thought of His coming, that our lives may become more simple, and real, and quiet, which will be in proportion as we love God above all and all for Him. As long as there is disorder in our lives, we must needs be restless and unhappy; we are in an unnatural state as it is, like a man trying to go on all fours, or planted in the ground. Our consciences will not let us assimilate ourselves to this condition of beasts or stocks, and so we are miserable. May we love God more and more, and learn to look forward to His coming. It would be very sad if to us, children of the Blessed Sacrament, the *Modicum tempus* should be a thought of unmixed dread, when it was meant so differently.

6. FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE

“ He breathed on them, and He said to them : Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins ye shall forgive, they are forgiven them ; and whose sins ye shall retain, they are retained.”—*St John* xx. 22, 23.

THE Sacrament of Penance is the Sacrament of Hope—the plank after the shipwreck. We had been told in Baptism to keep our light burning and our garments white, but our garment is defiled and our light quenched, and what we need is forgiveness, repeated forgiveness.

A Sacrament of infinite hope. Types of it in our Lord’s miracles—Our Lord (*St Luke* xiii. 3, 5) repeats twice : “ Except ye do penance, ye shall perish.”

“ Behold there was a woman, who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years : and she was bowed together, neither could she look upwards at all. Whom when Jesus saw, He called her unto Him, and said to her : Woman, thou art delivered from thy infirmity ; and He laid His hands upon her, and immediately she was made straight and glorified God.” (*St Luke* xiii. 11-13.)

The miracle is made the proof of the power of forgiveness ; when the man sick of the palsy was brought in our Lord said : “ Man, thy sins are

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

forgiven thee. And the Scribes and Pharisees began to think, saying: Who is this who speaketh blasphemies: who can forgive sins but God alone? And when Jesus knew their thoughts, answering, He said to them: What is it you think in your hearts? which is easier to say: thy sins are forgiven thee, or to say arise and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins, He saith to the sick of the palsy: I say to thee arise, and go into thy house. And immediately rising up before them, he took up the bed on which he lay, and he went away to his own house, glorifying God." (St Luke v. 18-25.)

The pathos in the quietness and easiness of the Sacrament of Penance. Baptism has its pomp and ceremony, but Penance little more than: "I absolve thee from thy sins; go in peace." It is like the sudden look which our Lord gave St Peter when he denied Him: "and the Lord turning looked on Peter, and Peter remembered the word of the Lord as He had said: before the cock crow thou shalt deny me thrice; and Peter going out wept bitterly." (St Luke xxii.) Or His words to the penitent thief: "Amen I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." There are no ceremonies to examine, so let us examine a little the parts and conditions of this Sacrament. It consists of three parts, as the Catechism tells us—Contrition, Confession, and Satisfaction.

Contrition is a hearty sorrow for our sins, whereby we have offended so good a God, with a firm purpose of amendment for the future. But the contrition which is required as a necessary part of

the Sacrament, is not perfect contrition. Perfect contrition involves an act of the Love of God above all things, and without the Sacrament would justify; but the contrition required is properly called attrition, and it is sufficient if the active motive be the fear of hell or the desire of heaven, provided we do not wilfully rest short of God in servile fear or sordid desire.

Here, then, we have our Blessed Lord, in the tender unselfishness of His love, contenting Himself with something short of the proper return of love, even when creating new claims upon it, and in fact saying to us: "Poor sinner, you have so used yourself not to love Me, that if only you will come back to Me, I will look not too closely into your motives; only be sorry for offending Me, and My forgiveness shall teach you the further lesson of love."

Attrition in the Sacrament is raised to an efficacy which of its own nature it does not possess. In confession we are admitted to be our own accuser; the most perfect secrecy is guaranteed to us by the extremest penalties, attached not merely to any direct revelation of a sin confessed, but even to the least word or act which might indirectly tend to such revelation.

And then a light penance is imposed, to which a sacramental efficacy is attached, as though our Lord would say: "Only show a willingness to do penance, and I will do the most of it for you."

The most striking thing about this sacrament is that, given the conditions of attrition and a confession of mortal sin as complete as our memory will allow, it has no limits to its application, no

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

amount or intensity of sinfulness is any bar. In the early Church there were persons who could not understand this. In the third century Novatian, a deacon of the Church of Rome, contended that apostates should not be received to penance.

Can you not understand how hard it must have seemed to many to take back to their love and fellowship Judases who had betrayed the Church? Yet, so penetrated was the Church with the tradition of her Master's boundless love in the Sacrament of Penance, that sooner than put these limitations upon the action of the Precious Blood, she would cast out these zealots, although they had suffered for the faith and bore on their bodies the stigmata of the Lord Jesus.

The one unforgivable sin is despair, disbelief in God's forgiveness; it is a blasphemy against the Precious Blood. Better any presumption. Though like the woman, of whom St Luke tells us, we have a spirit of infirmity many years, and are bowed together so that we cannot look upward at all, yet those Blessed Hands shall heal us in the Sacrament of Penance, and we shall be made straight, and glorify God.

7. THE ASCENSION

FOLLOWING CHRIST

“ And now I go to Him that sent Me, and none of you asketh me : Whither goest Thou ? ”—*St John xvi. 5.*

YET Simon Peter (*St John xiii. 36*) had asked : “ Lord, whither goest Thou ? ” and Thomas had complained : “ Lord, we know not whither Thou goest, and how can we know the way ? ” (*St John xiv. 5*).

Our Lord was not satisfied, because their questioning lacked perseverance, because they stopped before receiving an answer.

Because they treated it too much as a matter of speculation, ignoring the practical obligation of following. “ I am the way, the truth, and the life.”

Their “ whither ” should have been more precise ; “ after what manner ? ” or “ for what end ? ”

St Bernard : “ How few, O Lord, are willing to follow after Thee, whereas there are none who are unwilling to attain unto Thee.”

When the way leads up Calvary, and the truth is at hopeless variance with the world's maxims, and the life is lost here to be gained hereafter, then we are not inclined to be very persevering or very

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

explicit in our inquiries; and yet we know that all our happiness depends upon our attaining to Him.

Think of the wondrous ways, the goings forth of the Son of God.

1. When condescending to bring all things out of nothing, going forth, manifesting Himself, His wisdom and His power.

2. The Incarnation. The going forth as the Good Shepherd, to seek the sheep that had been lost. The Angel's "*Domine, quo vadis?*"

3. The going forth from His mother and St Joseph, the prelude of His missionary life, when He remained behind in Jerusalem. Our Lady's "*Domine, quo vadis,*" why hast thou done so to us?, when He spoke of His Father's business, which was our Redemption.

He goes forth to die, and to triumph, in His martyrs, in His vicar. The '*Domine, quo vadis*' Chapel. Lord, whither goest Thou, that we each one of us may follow after Thee? It is our only right road, that in which He guides us.

There are many different ways, some harder, some easier. Do not let us be curious about others, still less envious of them. Remember St Peter's question about St John, although so tenderly meant, was rebuked: "Lord, what shall this man do?" Jesus saith to him: "So I will have him to remain till I come, what is it to thee? Follow thou Me." (St John xxi. 21, 22.) We must trust Him, resting assured that He Who was wounded for our iniquities and scourged for our healing, is sensitive to our least suffering of body and soul, and only allows it for the intensification of our ultimate happiness.

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

Let us often ask ourselves: "My soul, whither art thou going?" and hearken before it is too late to the Master's solemn warning: "Friend, whereunto hast thou come?"

The reward of following. When the worst part of the journey comes, when the solid earth seems to sink away beneath us, and we find ourselves upon the troubled sea of death, He will turn back to meet us, walking upon the waters, and He will bear us up, as the eagle beareth up her young ones upon her wings; and the weary following will be over. Oh! happy soul, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.

8. SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF THE ASCENSION

THE RISEN LIFE

“ I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. He is not the God of the dead, but of the living.”—*St Matt. xxii. 32.*

THUS does our Lord comment on the Divine title with which the Jews were so familiar, and of which they were so proud: “ The God of Abraham, etc.,” and He proceeds to ground thereon an argument for the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the flesh.

At first sight, we hardly see why the former should imply the latter; it was perhaps more natural and easy that it should do so with the Jews than with us. They identified man more completely with his bodily life than we with our Christian metaphysic are inclined to do. Our Lord has no necessity to go into argument. The Sadducee, who denied the resurrection of the body, denied the existence of the spirit, and so of course the existence of the soul after death, although he probably seldom ventured to dogmatise on the subject, contenting himself with a mild scepticism. The Pharisee recognised with more or less explicitness both the one and the other, but found, as we all find, a difficulty in lifting his earth-bound eyes to the Jerusalem that is above.

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

Apart from revelation, we ground our belief in the soul's survival and immortality upon the simplicity which can admit of no dissolution into parts, for it has them not, and upon its independence of the body at least in one direction, the region of abstract truth. For the resurrection of the body we argue upon the relations between body and soul, man's essential duality, a duality essential at least to his integrity. It is a partnership in which the soul is necessary for the body's cohesion and distinction, and the body is necessary for the soul's normal exercise. Hence we conceive of our Blessed Lady (and the question may be entertained concerning certain other saints) that already the perfection has been granted her which the soul obtains from reunion with the glorified body. The souls of the Blessed, although absolutely contented to await the times and seasons of the Divine Will, yet ever desire and claim this reunion as one necessary to their ultimate perfection.

An ancient spiritual writer illustrates the grievous character of the separation of soul and body by a comparison drawn from a scene familiar to the farmstead of Spain or Italy. One of an aged yoke of oxen falls dead beside his yoke-fellow at the ploughing. The survivor will not at all be comforted, but fills the place with his complaining, nor will he submit to be yoked to any other, for the twain have grown so used to a life in common that they are in conformity from horn to hoof. With a like reluctance, in the natural order, do those lifelong companions body and soul part from one another. Indeed it is only the Creator of both that can supply the terrible void occasioned

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

by that separation, by His gracious presence, and by His promise that such separation shall not be final. Hence the Christian tradition of reverence for the lifeless body, which in the promise of the Resurrection is not wholly without life, and the repugnance amongst Christians to anticipate violently the natural unclothing of decay.

Even St Paul, who so longed to be dissolved and to be with Christ, felt the natural shrinking from this separation. "For we also, who are in this tabernacle, do groan, being burdened; because we would not be unclothed, but clothed upon, that that which is mortal may be swallowed up by life." (2 Cor. v. 4.)

I need not say that our Lord does not enter here upon these considerations. He bases man's immortality upon his relations with the living God; as He says in the fuller record of His words (St Luke xx. 38) "for they all live to Him," "Neither can they die any more, for they are equal to the angels, and are the sons of God, since they are the children of the Resurrection," of which resurrection our Lord was the author and the first-fruit. (St Luke xx. 36.)

God of the living, to Whom all live. It is a great thought upon which to lay hold. But, on the other hand, is not this world the world of the living? Indeed the dead have little part in it. A few of the greatest, or the best loved, enjoy, if I may so speak, a scant occasional remembrance, a tear is shed, a breath of incense is offered. But it is to the living that the world belongs, with its alternation of nights and days, and the solemn procession of the seasons, and its sowing and its

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

harvest, its interchange of love and friendship ; the busy hum of its cities and the quiet of its countryside.

It is not a world of the dead assuredly, but neither, I would submit, is it a world of the living. It may be called more precisely a world of the dying ; "*Morituri te salutant*," "those who are to die salute thee," is the very form of its liturgy. They are not living who are doomed to die ; upon whom the shadow of death is lying and a darker shadow still, the threatened possibility of that second death from which there is no resurrection.

Living to the world we die ; to God alone we live, if we live at all. How energetic and full must be the life of heaven which we share with the living God ! Modern irreligious sentiment is apt to mock at the Christian conception of heaven, as though suggesting a sort of sleepy hollow ; whereas in union with God it must be life, and light, and energy, compared with which the keenest life that history gives us is but a sleep. Our life here must needs be a gradual awaking from the dreamless sleep of the beginning of being, through the dream-haunted shallows of this semi-life, into the fully conscious life that is with God, or the fully conscious death that is without Him.

Here in this world we are not without God ; on every side there are traces of Him. The misery is that men realise so little their dependence upon God for all the enjoyment of life. It is as though eyes enamoured of colour should ignore light, in which all colour has its being. One of the Scriptural names for hell is outer darkness, and it is most expressive.

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

It dares to invoke the conception of something outside God, a region where God is not, which of course is in itself impossible, in order to express the absolute absence of that Divine benediction attaching to all other presence of God.

He is not the God of the dead hell, not because they live, but because they are dead, dead with the second death. Their state is an existence, rather than a life, for there is no life unless we live to God, or may at least hope to live to God.

God is not the God of the dead, but of the living; yet He is the God of our dead who live to Him. In union with God only can we remain in touch with our dear ones who are gone.

Children of the Resurrection, we may hope to rise again to the life of grace; or if, as we trust at this holy season, we have so risen, we may hope never to die again. The garden of the Resurrection is full of life, representing the life both of heaven and earth—great angels, and holy women, and penitent disciples. It is a goodly company with whom we may travel in the city of God to the mountains where we are to meet our Risen Saviour. He has conquered death and hell, and in the fountain of His new life He will, if we let Him, and venturously confide our impotence into His Almighty hands, renew our youth, and for the leprosy of sinful habit restore to us the innocent flesh of the little child. This you shall have, if you will but believe, and hope, and begin to love. For, as St Pacian says, the penitent “desires to love and to be loved,” and ye shall live, and live for ever. O house of Israel why will ye die?

D.—PENTECOST TO ADVENT

I. WHIT SUNDAY

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

“ I will pour upon you clean water, and you shall be cleansed from all your filthiness, and I will cleanse you from all your idols. And I will give you a new heart, and put a new spirit within you : and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit in the midst of you : and I will cause you to walk in my commandments, and to keep my judgments, and do them.”

—*Ezech.* xxxvi. 25-27.

THUS did the prophet Ezechiel speak of the coming of the Holy Ghost, which we are celebrating to-day. The Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity have each a distinct action peculiar to himself, within the Divine nature. The Father begets, the Son is begotten, and the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son. All actions without the Divine nature, such as creation and sanctification, is the action of all three Persons of the Blessed Trinity.

The appropriation of certain external actions to one Person rather than to another is an expression of the character of that Person, and is justified by the language both of Holy Scripture and the Church.

Now there is first an appropriation of all external

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

action with regard to creatures, both in the material and spiritual order, to the Holy Spirit. The immediate operation on creatures is attributed to the Holy Spirit. He is called in the Hymn, the *Veni Creator*, "*Digitus paternæ dexteræ*," "the finger of the Father's right hand."

He is the immediate author, nay, according to many, the formal cause of grace. He it is who moves over the face of the abyss, and calls the world into being. He is the operative virtue in the Incarnation, as also in the Holy Mass, as the Church recognises when she says: "Come, Sanctifier, Almighty, eternal God, and bless this Sacrifice made ready in Thy Holy name"; and He is the immediate author of grace, both of habitual grace, viz., the supernatural participation in the life of God, and of the actual graces, the active supernatural assistance, in the warfare of life.

It is the Holy Ghost who built up from its humble beginnings in the upper chamber in Jerusalem the mighty fabric of the Church, and who builds up every Christian soul in habits of virtue, consecrating it as a temple of God. Now it is of the Holy Spirit as the source of grace, as the Divine architect of the spiritual life, that I wish to speak.

The Holy Spirit the author of grace—what is grace? the elevation of nature to a certain participation in the Divine life, whereby it obtains a scope altogether beyond its nature.

Man was so constituted in the beginning that the integrity or perfection of his nature was given by grace, and with the loss of grace was itself lost; so that it could only be recovered by the restoration

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

of grace. It is as though a building was left without its top storey. It is not rounded off and completed except by supplying that top storey, and if that be removed, the storey below is ragged and imperfect. Man was always meant to be something more than man by the endowment of grace. Therefore, when grace is lost, not only is the supernatural participation in that which is not properly his own gone, but the perfection or integrity which should complete his nature is gone also.

The whole of man's claim to the supernatural life upon earth and its perfection in heaven depends upon grace, which is the free gift of God.

No degree of merely natural virtue, the preference of the noble and the beautiful to the vile and squalid without any reference to God, can in any degree merit heaven. It can only claim a reward here below. At the same time, God is ever desirous of supernaturally elevating His human creatures, and He loves the nature He has made, and we cannot doubt that as a man loves the horse who carries him well, so God loves the nobler exhibitions of merely natural virtue, and, for aught we know, these may never attain to any high excellence without the seal of grace. But in themselves they have no higher life. It is the grace of the Holy Spirit which is the initiation of every action meritorious of eternal life, and it is by correspondence with that grace, though itself only possible under the special influence of grace, that our merciful Lord allows us to establish a claim of justice to the inheritance of heaven. He rewards us for His own work in us with which we have more or

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

less corresponded, and we are allowed to claim the crown of justice, "*corona justitiæ*." Thus and no otherwise did our Lady and St Paul win their crowns, thus and no otherwise shall you and I win our crowns, if we win them at all.

It is because of this grace of the Holy Spirit, prevenient, concomitant, and effective, so freely and so persistently offered to us, that we sinners, in spite of all the precedent of our life making the other way, venture to hope. Knowing that God loves us (and we cannot doubt He does so when we look at our Crucifix and hear what the Church has to tell us of the power of the Holy Spirit), we should disdain the sickly cowardice, the unkind distrust of despair, and begin to turn ourselves towards God. No doubt there have been many delusions outside the Church on the subject of conversion, as that it admits of no relapse, and that the work is all over in a minute; but for the most part this is merely an exaggeration of an important truth we are only too apt to forget, viz., that conversion, like most other critical actions, is performed quickly and once for all. The Saints, and almost everyone else who ever gave up an evil or indifferent life for a good one, could probably tell you—if they trusted themselves to talk about it—the day and the hour of their conversion, of their definitely taking God's side in the battle of life at the expense of their old selves.

Here, then, consider what fairer date for the beginning of a new life could we choose than the feast of to-day. The Feast of the Holy Spirit—the Feast of our Father St Philip's chief devotion.

The sin against the Holy Ghost, of which our

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

Lord and the Apostles use words so terrible that, were it not for the guidance of the Church, we might be tempted to think that a man might sin too much to be forgiven, but of which we must admit at least that as compared with all other sins it has the least claim to be forgiven, would seem to consist of two factors: (1) despair of the work of the Holy Spirit in ourselves, and (2) contempt of that work in others.

Let us, as the initial grace of our conversion, demand the twofold grace of confidence in the work of the Holy Ghost within us and reverence for His work in others, whether in the Church at large or in individual souls.

2. TRINITY SUNDAY

THE INDWELLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

"I will ask the Father, and He shall give you another Paraclete, that he may abide with you for ever. The spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, nor knoweth him : but you shall know him ; for he will abide with you, and shall be in you."

—*St John* xiv. 16, 17.

A DISTINGUISHING characteristic of man is imperfection, incompleteness. He must find his perfection, if he is to find it, outside himself. If he does not rise above the ideal line, so to speak, of his nature, he falls below it. He cannot run on all fours like the brutes ; he must either stand erect, or grovel. Thus his integrity was made to depend upon his state of grace, and ceased with its loss.

Of course every creature must depend upon its Creator, in Whom it lives, and moves, and has its being ; but with man the dependence is something more. For in man there is the higher, the spiritual nature, in which he is a little lower than the angels, and the lower or sensual nature in which he is a little higher than the beasts, and these are welded together in one personality, and yet are always at war the one with the other. And the higher nature has just sufficient leadership to feel the responsibility of failure without the immediate strength of hold to ensure success. At first sight this looks like a contradiction, but it is not so ; the soul is

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

free, but its freedom is dependent upon its recourse to the assistance of its Creator. It is free to obtain by prayer the grace without which it is not free to resist temptation. Man needs the special assistance of God in order not to fall away from the end of his creation, which the lower animals attain necessarily. God from the beginning has always offered Himself to man as a Comforter. He has sent His angel upon whom He has set the seal of His presence to lead His people, and to guard them in the way, and He has promised to hearken to those who cry to Him. He is inviting mankind to converse with Him in joy and in affliction.

To carry out more fully His work of comforting mankind, the Eternal God, the second Person of the Blessed Trinity, became man, and gave us His company as fellow-labourer and fellow-sufferer in the bonds of time. And now He tells His Apostles that a fuller dispensation of comfort will be initiated, when He withdraws His visible presence from them, and sends down upon them the Holy Ghost, the Spirit Who proceeds from the Father and the Son. "It is better for you," our Lord says, "that I go, for if I do not go the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I go I will send Him to you." (St John xvi. 7.)

For then the Church, the great living work of the Holy Ghost, will begin the great economy of faith and sacraments, so vast, so strong, so perfect, so completely effective for all who will submit themselves to it that, as we read in St Peter's first Epistle: "The Angels of heaven desire to look thereon." (1 Peter i. 12.) This is the great work of the Blessed Trinity for the comforting and

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

perfecting of man who, left to himself, is so imperfect, so helpless, but who with grace is invested with almightiness, as St Paul says: "I can do all things in Him Who comforts me." (Phil. iv. 13).

Now when we Catholics speak of Sacraments, and ceremonies, and the intercession of Angels and Saints, as forming a great system of Divine comfort, those who are outside the Church exclaim that we are allowing a system of forms and ceremonies to stand between us and God. But they seem to forget that we are in a great material system which is calculated to bar our intercourse with God. There is no question of attaining to the open air of heaven whilst we are here; we must dwell within doors, but we may have open doors and windows, and this is what the Sacraments give us—access to God. Not that our intercourse with God is limited by the Sacraments, the effect of which is to make us more habitually sensitive to His presence. As the Holy Ghost is the great Architect of the Church, building up and sustaining its hierarchy, so also He is the great Architect of the spiritual life of each individual soul, and it is of immense importance that we should recognise this: that not only do we live, and move, and have our being in God, but that the spiritual life of faith, hope and charity is the result of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit the Comforter, and that without His indwelling we are dead to eternal life, to the life of grace and glory. That with Him to despair is blasphemous folly, without Him to hope is mad presumption. You know how intensely devout St Philip Neri was to

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

the Holy Ghost. Of course all three Persons are operative in every blessing bestowed upon us, but the Holy Ghost and the action appropriated to Him he felt to be the supreme expression of God's love for us, the closest and most intimate fostering, the touch of God's right hand entering our life, and making it a life altogether new with an everlasting continuity. It does not matter what manner of persons we are, we need to love and to be loved, and it is altogether the most imperious need of our nature; and there is really nothing else to love save God; just as there is nothing to be seen in this world except light, for colours and even shapes, so far as they are objects of sight, are merely the reflections and refractions of light. So it is that what incites our love in creatures is but the reflection of the light of the Divine countenance. God alone is absolutely faithful.

Understand, then, that the Comforter's mission is to each one of us, and that if we will let Him (for He will not do us violence), He will undertake the responsibility of our whole life, past, present, and to come; He will enable us to sorrow for past sin without being unhappy, and will make faith, hope and charity a very part of our lives, not mere exercises; and more and more shall we learn that conversation with God is the one remedy against loneliness, the one guarantee against depression, and the basis of all stability in our dearest relations with others. If our life has hitherto proved in any degree profitless and unhappy, believe me it is because we have tried to do without God; whereas, if you will, He will abide with you, and dwell in you.

3. SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE GREAT SUPPER

“A certain man made a great supper, and invited many.”—*St Luke* xiv. 16.

“He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me and I in him.”—*St John* vi. 57.

THE Holy Eucharist, the Sacrament of Charity, union, the object of love, forgetfulness of self in the possession of the Loved One. The Holy Eucharist, the Sacrament of God's self-forgetfulness. What do we believe about it? We believe that when the words of consecration are pronounced by the priest in the Mass, the whole substance of the bread and the whole substance of the wine is changed into the Body and Blood of Christ, that our Lord, true God and true man, is present, whole and entire, in every particle of the bread and every drop of the wine, that only the appearance of bread and wine remain as sacramental veils under which Christ's union with the soul may be consummated, and by which the character of that union may be expressed.

We could not, dare not receive in His own form even as a little child. No such union would be

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

possible, therefore both Godhead and manhood are concealed. The species of bread and wine are chosen as representatives of the food by which our bodily strength and substance is repaired, and we are enabled to go through the tasks of our daily life. Viaticum is the name given to the last communion, because it is the food for the most important stage of our journey, but all communion is viaticum. Our whole life is a journey, of which the act of dying is the last stage. This, then, is what we are called upon to believe, that Almighty God has made Himself our friend, our servant, our food.

We know the painfulness of rude companionship of people with whom we have not a thought or an expression in common. I am not talking of class distinction, refinement, and vulgarity. Kindness and hardness and coarseness of heart are to be found in all classes; but think of the worst and vilest companionship it has ever been our misfortune to come across, and then think of our Blessed Lord keeping company with us. In the Canticle, the Te Deum, we bless Him in that He did not abhor, did not disdain, the Virgin's womb. If there was such a condescension that He bore His mother's company, what must His bearing ours be?

But the Holy Eucharist is not merely a sacrament in which Christ dwells with men, it is a sacrifice in which Almighty God, to whom all mankind are debtors, admits them to pay their debts in full out of His own treasury. The value of a Mass. We may not only pay our debts but even make God our Debtor. Thus we can understand the language of the saints whose own love taught them

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

what the love of God was, when they spoke of the extravagance of God's love.

Now what is asked of us in return is love, a something more than faith or hope, something of a forgetfulness of self and a remembrance of Him. We cannot have the love of saints, which may be called the love of reasonable beings, the love of the children: would that we might have the love of brute beasts for their masters. For, see, He has taken the children's bread, the bread of angels, the bread of saints, and given it to dogs. He does not put us off with the crumbs that fall from His table, but we fully share in the fellowship of the saints.

I have spoken of the devotion of the saints as nothing more than reasonable. To the mass of mankind it is an extravagance, even to us Catholics a marvel. But if we regard it in the light of our Lord's love as a return of that love, why, every priest at every altar should be a St Philip transfigured in the white fire of His love; every man and every woman who kneels at the communion rails should be a St Aloysius or a St Catherine of Siena. I mean simply, that this would be something like a reasonable return, and nothing more than reasonable. Let us, at least, be faithful in coming when our Master bids us, and attentive during the short time we are with Him, and sorry (as dumb animals sometimes seem to be sorry) that we cannot do more for Him.

When the sinner comes to die, it must seem to him that he is as one who has starved to death at the bottom of a pit, not seeing that ladders and ropes have been provided for his escape, if he had chosen to avail himself of them.

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

Anyhow, at best, it must be a terrible shock for us when we see things as they are, when we understand what our Lord has been doing for us, and the poverty of the return we have made to Him. (The mother of St Alexius.)

4. THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

“ Rejoice with me because I have found my sheep that was lost.”—*St Luke* xv. 6.

“ I am the Good Shepherd, and I know Mine, and Mine know Me.”—*St John* x. 14.

“ I KNOW Mine ”—Our Lord knows His sheep, by Creation, by Redemption, by Foreknowledge. “ But yet behold the hand of him that betrayeth Me, is with Me on the table.” He knew the treason of Judas, the weakness of Peter, which Peter did not know: “ Lord, I am ready to go with Thee both into prison and to death ”; and He said: “ I say to thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, till thou thrice deniest that thou knowest Me.” The patient knew not, the Physician knew. We do not know others, we do not know ourselves. “ Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee.” (*St John* xxi. 16.)

Our Lord’s knowledge of those who are not yet of the “ fold ”: “ other sheep I have who are not of this fold; them also must I bring, and they shall hear My voice, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd.” First known before they know, then attracted until they cry “ *ubi pascis?* ”

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

and finally led into the fold. How many converts have been so led!

The knowledge of God's love and favour. "Many shall say to Me in that day, 'Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name, and cast out devils in Thy name, and done many miracles in Thy name?' And then I will profess unto them, I never knew you." (St Matt. vii. 22-23.)

The knowledge of the Incarnation by participation of nature. (St Cyril of Alexandria.) "I know Mine as the Father knows Me and I know the Father." (St John x. 15.)

"Mine know Me"—His knowledge of us no sign, for it is not visible: our knowledge of Him a sign that we are His, and to be His for ever. "Who saith that he knows God, and keeps not His commandments, the same is a liar, and the truth is not in him." (1 John ii. 4.)

"He came unto His own, and His own received Him not; but as many as received Him, He gave them power to be made the Sons of God to them that believe in His name." (St John i. 11-12.)

His sheep must recognise Him in His Passion, although "we have seen Him and He hath neither beauty nor comeliness." (Is. liii.)

"Lord, remember me, when Thou shalt come into Thy kingdom." We must recognise Him in His Church, although persecuted, as the triumphant conqueror—as the eternal wisdom, although the wisdom of the world is so much more brilliant, and the Cross of Christ is accounted as foolishness.

We must recognise Him in His poor, in all those who stand in need of our assistance. (St

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

Matt. xxv. 34-46.) Both classes speak as though they had not known Christ, but in the one it is the ignorance of humility, in the other of scorn and infidelity.

We must recognise Christ in the inspirations of His grace. How various these are—how He speaks in the voice of reason—in the order of our various duties—how He is ever walking with us, disguised indeed, but ready to manifest Himself to us, if our conduct gives any promise of our listening to Him.

He is backward in speaking to us, lest our guilt in rejecting Him should be so great. He says many things to us—things that have little or no meaning except to ourselves. He is the director of every Christian soul. It is true that we seek direction from the priest, but the office of the human director is to assist the soul to listen to and to interpret the voice of the Good Shepherd, Who speaks to our heart. The human director fulfils as it were the office of porter or keeper of the fold-door: "To the Shepherd the porter openeth; and the sheep hear His voice; and He calleth His own sheep by name, and leadeth them out, and when He hath led out His own sheep, He goeth before them: and the sheep follow Him, because they know His voice. But a stranger they follow not, but fly from him, because they know not the voice of strangers." (St John x. 3-5.)

The many strange voices of which the earth is full: the voice of Christ, the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

The dreadful pathos of the world's ignorance of Christ, and the ignorance of even the better sort

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

of Christians. The knowledge that the goats are to have of the Good Shepherd; they might have been His: recognition of Him Whom they rejected: "they shall look upon Him Whom they have pierced." Whatever, whoever will teach us to know Christ should be welcome; *Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini*. Death, or sickness, or loss of friends.

"By Me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved; and he shall go in, and go out, and shall find pastures." (St John x. 9.) He shall go in: he shall pass from the exterior darkness of unbelief to the light of faith; he shall go out, from the obscurity of faith to the clearness of the beatific vision.

"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me, and I give them everlasting life, and they shall not perish for ever, and no man shall pluck them out of My hand."

5. FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

(A) THE SPIRIT OF GRATITUDE

“ Which when Simon Peter saw, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying : Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.”—*St Luke* v. 8.

A MERE material blessing had been vouchsafed to St Peter, extraordinary in degree, but still of the kind for which he had been looking, and had a right to expect in his profession of a fisherman.

What is his first feeling? one of the sense of his own unworthiness, that he was a sinful man to whom the ordinary blessings of sunshine and rain and the means of earning a sufficiency of daily bread in the sweat of his brow were more than he deserved. Why should God approach so nigh unto him as to work a miracle for his sake, sinner as he was? Therefore he cries: “ Depart from me, O Lord ”; not that his sins made our Lord’s presence repugnant to him, God forbid; that presence is his joy and his consolation, the very light of his eyes; without it, his life must be an absolute blank. But his heart is dissolved with love. He feels rather for his Master, than for himself. He is stung with a generous indignation that Jesus

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

should so waste Himself on such as he. As a poor servant, sick and forsaken by his comrades, might protest against his master serving him, although without that service he must die. Or, as we believe, the souls of those that die in God's love but are not yet cleansed from all stain of sin, will shrink from the loving arms of their Spouse, and endure patiently the agony of that separation until every stain is burnt away, because they love Him so much and are so jealous for His honour.

In such a spirit did St Peter cry: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

In what spirit do we receive the benefits of God whether material or spiritual? Is our prevailing feeling one of humiliation at our own unworthiness? Nay, it is well if we are not simply ungrateful: and what benefits have we not received at His hands, all the good and pleasant things we have enjoyed throughout our life! You will say, perhaps, some of you: "These have been few and far between." It may be so; you may have had fewer of the good things of this life than most of your companions. But then this life is but a day's journey; you do not require much on the way, if you are sure of food and rest at the end of it.

But it is of God's spiritual benefits I would speak. The spiritual opportunities that He gives you in every moment of your lives, in which you may lay up a treasure of merit in heaven. The way in which He surrounds you by the influence of His Sacraments. His presence with you in the Holy Eucharist. The way in which He holds you to

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

Him in spite of your repeated sins by the Sacrament of Penance. He might cast you out of His Church for every mortal sin, but no; though you have made yourself His enemy, although you have prayed Him to depart from you, not as St Peter prayed, but with the impious Gerasenes (St Mark v. 17), He still keeps you in the bosom of the Church: any moment that you will, you may be reconciled to Him in the Sacrament of Penance.

We are lifted completely out of our low state by the gift of the grace of God, being thereby made partakers in a mysterious manner of the Divine nature.

Although we may, unlike the Apostle, receive the material gifts of God greedily, with but little thought of the Giver, and, worse still, set but little store ordinarily upon His spiritual gifts, yet there are moments when we must needs fall down at Jesus' knees, and cry: "Depart from me," in mingled love and despair. Only do not despair of His love, and He will not take you at your word, but will draw closer to you. Who of us, when kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament, has not felt this unutterable self-reproach when contrasted with the closeness of our Master's presence and our own recent ill-treatment of Him? He is busy with our soul upon the sick bed to which our sins have brought us; we are so desperately unworthy, we can hardly bear that He should touch us. But there is joy in the thought that He will not leave us. Verily, He has a strange hankering after sinners. He has been all our lives inviting us to Him; let us not by our

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

obstinate ingratitude force Him to do that which He will never do unless we finally reject Him, bid us depart from Him for ever.

“ Master, the day is far spent, and the night is at hand : abide with us now and for ever.”

(B) FIDELITY TO GRACE

“ Master, we have laboured all the night and have taken nothing : but at Thy word I will let down the net.”

—*St Luke v. 5.*

Man must needs labour. “ Man goeth forth to his labour and his business, until the evening.” The idle labour so grievously that they are driven to active labour for distraction, for time is fashioned into a sort of rack for them, upon which they are stretched, and strained, and the minutes are broken up into fragments under them, and their day is like a wheel with innumerable cogs which catch and bruise them. But the wicked labour worst of all. We read in the Book of Wisdom how they complain : “ we wearied ourselves in the way of iniquity and destruction, and have walked through hard ways, but the way of the Lord we have not known.” (*Wisdom v.*)

And we have to labour, we have to work out our salvation in fear and trembling, not to sit it out, or to play it out, but to *work* it out. How, then, are we to work, that we may work successfully, and, so far as may be, easily ?

First of all, we must not work in the night, for we have laboured all the night, the Apostles say,

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

and have taken nothing. We must know what we are doing, in whom we trust; we must labour in the light of faith, and not merely in faith, but from the motive of faith, with a good intention, a supernatural intention, in order to fulfil our Master's will and to work out our salvation.

Your labour must be in the ship of Peter, in the Holy Catholic Church, if it is to be fruitful. If through your own fault you are not within it, nothing that you can do will be of any avail to your eternal salvation, for Christ went up into the one ship that was Simon's whence He taught the multitude—the school of unity in which Christ has established the chair of truth.

We must labour in the presence and at the Word of Christ. "At Thy word I will let down the net."

The word of Christ—the word of revelation to the Church—His word to the individual. He is always speaking to us by the inspirations of His grace. He does not speak to us all at once, but gradually, as we can bear Him. Yet there is a wholeness, a completeness, in what He says to us at different periods of our life. We all of us have a vocation. Christ would have us live a certain life, and that life embraces a variety of actions of one kind or another. A certain special assistance, a presence of Christ, ensuring success, is due to us when we are attempting to carry out His whole word to us at any particular time, which is not due to us when we are only carrying out fragments of it, and consciously omitting what we know to be part of it. This is the *rationale* of a vocation, and it is not merely confined to the

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

choice once for all of a state of life, but regards many different phases of it. How common it is for a well-intentioned person, who wants to save his soul, to lay out his life in what he considers a judicious distribution between religion and the world, without considering what our Lord is asking of him, not recollecting that no dealing with the world is lawful except in subordination to our Master's Will. And so their labour is very unfruitful, and very hard. Perhaps it is only a little more that Christ is asking of them—weekly instead of monthly confession, the abandonment of one trifling amusement or indulgence—but this will make all the difference between Christ's presence with us and His absence; not that He will be wholly absent from such good works as we do for Him, but that a certain intimate presence, rendering all that we do fruitful and easy, will be wanting to us because of our unfaithfulness.

Our Lord bade the Apostles launch out into the deep. They were hugging the shore too closely.

The barren shore an image of the carnal-minded synagogue which lost Christ in their attention to external ritual, which should have led them to Him. Faith in the depth of the wisdom and power of God, in the mystery of God's becoming man, which was to convert the nations. Launch out into the deep: do not be afraid of acting up to what you believe. Why remain in that line of shallow water where you are tossed, and can catch no fish? A few strokes, and you will be out in the still, deep water, where you may labour peacefully and profitably. Alas! for lack of a little courage, so many of us spend our lives struggling

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

in the surf, wearying ourselves to death for next to nothing ! If ever there was a time when Catholics are called upon to live up to their faith it is now, when on all sides without the Church men are finding out that they do not believe, and are plucking their stunted faith to pieces, and win applause by so doing. Remember that it is only faith acted up to that is secure, that every infidelity to grace tends to lessen our hold upon the truth.

6. FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE CHRISTIAN STANDARD

“ I tell you, that unless your justice abound more than that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.”—*St Matt.* v. 20.

OUR Lord frequently denounces the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees, but here it is evident that He is not speaking of what is wrong, but is contrasting what is best in them with what He requires from His disciples.

The old law was, as the Christian Law, founded upon the two great precepts of the love of God and the love of our neighbour. It was a system of justice, of righteousness, in order to the giving his due to God and to man. But the old law was a system of external government, by which the fulfilment of certain external duties was prescribed under temporal penalties, and therefore necessarily regarded sin in its external aspect of crime, rather than in its spiritual heinousness; whereas the Christian law prescribes few external acts, but incessant spiritual watchfulness and communion with God—and this under no system of temporal rewards and punishments, but under the spiritual influence of heaven and hell.

The Jewish law was, taken broadly, an instru-

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

ment for the elemental education of barbarians who had fallen away from the original civilisation of Paradise, at the same time that it afforded, in its prophetic appeals and promises, food for the spiritual life of those who wished to be spiritual. In the Christian Law *all* are bidden be perfect as their heavenly Father is perfect. It is a system, not of education merely for something better to come, but of sanctification for the enjoyment and appropriation of that which has already come.

Christianity could afford to be at once so exacting as regards spiritual perfection, so free as regards external penalty, because of the Sacraments by which the Precious Blood circulates, as it were in its veins, strengthening men's wills by hope and charity, and clearing their spiritual vision by faith.

When our Lord says our justice must be more than the justice of the scribes and Pharisees if we are to enter into the kingdom of heaven, it must differ from theirs in being comparatively internal, more exact, and more disinterested, at least more remote from temporal interests.

It is true, the sinfulness of sins of thought is part of the natural law written on man's heart, but the knowledge of this is liable to a great extent to become obscure. It was so in the heathen world, and only partially realised in the Jewish dispensation, while it is characteristic of Christianity to emphasise it.

Our souls are the temples of the Holy Spirit; their purity of supreme importance; duty of living in God's presence. *Minutiæ* of Jewish external ceremonial transferred to the spiritual temple.

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

Disinterested as far as temporal interests are concerned. Hell instead of stoning, heaven instead of a land flowing with milk and honey.

The fulfilment of the Jewish law was very laborious. The law of sacrifices, the immense amount of work involved; on the other hand the Christian law is described as an easy yoke, a light burden.

The work a Christian has to do, the spiritual work of watchfulness, and prayer, and striving after perfection, in reality much greater; but then the means are so much more ample.

From him to whom much has been given, much will be required. Are we not a favoured people compared with those about? Have we not the Precious Blood to wash us from our sins in Penance, and Christ to dwell with us in the Holy Eucharist?

Numbers, with only the Sacrament of Baptism and a few texts of Scripture, are better than we are, have attained to the conversion of their lives and to the love of Jesus Christ. Compare our judgment with theirs; forecast the time when we and they must stand side by side before the tribunal of Christ. We have not been great sinners; we have been neither hot nor cold; we have been as it were in glass cases, petrified in the atmosphere of our own self-satisfaction and indifference, a sort of dried specimen of a respectable Catholic, a dreadful parody of the miracle of Gedeon's fleece, which remained dry whilst all the ground about it was saturated with dew. We have possessed the fullness of the revelation of Christ so as to be able to take in its full harmony, and they have only

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

had fragments, the crumbs that have fallen from the children's table, and yet they have thriven, and we have starved. When death tears down the screen that intercepts the light, we shall see that the ground upon which we have been walking so carelessly is holy ground; that indeed not only the Sacraments but that in their degree all the services and ceremonies of Holy Church are saturated with the Precious Blood, are in a thousand ways vehicles to us of that plenteous Redemption which He wrought for us upon the Cross. Surely our justice should be more than the justice of those who do not partake of our privileges.

What stands so much in the way of our salvation is the abuse of the means of grace, which causes the withdrawal of the inward gift, the frustration of the spiritual efficacy of the Sacraments.

But also our hindrance of the missionary action of the Church, our practical frustration of the note of sanctity. I tell you that if we did not neutralise by our miserable lives the due influence of the lives of the Saints, the world would have been converted long ago; but for every one of these examples of sanctity, non-Catholics can point to a dozen or more of their Catholic neighbours, young and middle-aged and old, who are as self-indulgent, as uncharitable, and as loose in their conversation as the rest of the world. And so we undo the work of the Saints, for which they spent their sweat and their blood, and so living we wonder God does not do more for us. Believe me, until we become missionaries, not of this devil's sort but of God, by making use of the grace given us, and showing

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

it forth in our lives, nothing good will befall us. And this is looked for from us even by those who are most opposed to us. They have an instinctive feeling, in spite of themselves, that Catholics should be better than other men. We know that this instinctive feeling is right, we ought to be better than our neighbours, and assuredly we each ought to be a hundredfold better than we are.

“I tell you that unless your justice abound more than that of your neighbours, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

7. SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE MULTITUDE OF BELIEVERS

“ I have compassion on the multitude, for behold they have now been with Me three days, and have nothing to eat.”—*St Mark* viii. 2.

THIS miracle presents with peculiar keenness the human nature which was united in our Blessed Lord with the nature of God.

“ I have compassion,” or, as the original word expresses it, “ I am sick for pity.” God could have mercy, could take pity on our miseries, knowing them as the Creator of our nature; but He could not feel compassion. Compassion implies that we have felt the same ourselves, and may feel it again. It is a sort of infection of feeling which we catch from one another, in virtue of our community of nature. Some degree of community of nature is necessary for such sympathy, whereby our neighbour’s pain is reflected upon us and made our own. Our Blessed Lord knew hunger, and thirst, and weariness, not merely as God knows them, but as man. He had felt them all: and therefore, looking on that multitude of men and women and children who had followed Him so faithfully for three days, and had had nothing to eat, He not only loved them and pitied their sufferings, but He had compassion, He was sick with pity.

There is something very wonderful and very

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

pathetic in a multitude or crowd. The strange merging of individualities into one, without being wholly lost. The way in which men when massed together are exposed to strange and violent impulses, whether for good or evil, from which individuals are comparatively free, as great sheets of water are exposed to the action of the winds.

There is something pathetic in men's resemblance, when thus massed, to the lower creation, to a herd of sheep, as suggestive of the dependence upon Him Who openeth His hand, and feedeth all things, and leads His people like sheep. Crowds are not naturally bad; left to themselves there is a predominance of honest human nature in them; but they are exposed to frightful impulses; they are dangerous combinations, except so far as they are gathered together in Christ's name—at least in His name so far as that they have a distinctly-understood, honest object.

One of our Lord's great objects in coming into this world was to unite us into a compact body, with a variety of common objects, all subordinated to one great one, the establishment of the Kingdom of Christ in our own hearts and throughout the world. (The crowd at the communion rail, the priest's joy more than King Solomon's.)

We cannot help being of assistance or hindrance to one another in the attainment of this object. He is the Head, we are the members. His mystical body, throughout which the Sacraments, as so many veins, carry the virtue of Christ's Precious Blood. Almost everything we do or say tends either to the edification or to the scandal of our neighbour. All our other combinations ought to

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

be made in subordination to this great association which Christ has founded; except so far as our natures are purified by union with Christ, the closer our union with one another the larger field of corrupted human nature do we present to the influences of the demon.

The secret of the Church's claims over the family and the state. The multitude upon which Christ had compassion was a figure of the Church, an association of which He was the centre, and which therefore moved securely under the influence of His Holy Spirit. Their wants could not fail to be satisfied for He was with them, their King and their Shepherd.

But there is another multitude, the world outside the Church, upon whom our Lord also has compassion because they have nothing to eat, inasmuch as they have forsaken Him, and like sheep have gone astray. To these we all have a mission, to bring them in by our charity and good example at least into the Church.

We must recollect that the world is really hungry; they have only to be convinced that the Church can supply their want. And though we belong to that blessed multitude with whom Christ abides, yet I would have you look forward a few months in the Gospel history to another crowd, containing many perhaps of the same individuals, or at least many who had been hearers of our Lord and witnesses of His miracles, many certainly of those who had formed part of the triumphant Procession of Palm Sunday. Listen to their cries of Crucify Him, Crucify Him. Our Lord's worst enemies were those to whom He had done most

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

good. Judas' close intercourse with our Lord was his qualification for his office of traitor. Whenever there is some evil deed to be done against the Church or the Holy Father, it is some bad Catholic who leads the way.

To the end of our lives, nay, for all eternity we are to be with others—members of a crowd, influencing and being influenced for good or evil.

Look at that multitude standing before the throne of the Lamb, with palms in their hands; hear their voices blending into one, like the voice of many waters, rejoicing in the Communion of praise, the joy of each increasing the joy of all. Hear the Angels saying, not each one to himself, but to one another: "Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth," and try to understand the closeness of that union which Christ would establish on earth to be consummated in heaven.

And give one glance at that other multitude, alas, a great one lost, banished into the outer darkness. True to their nature, in life they sought union, but not through Christ. They sought it, and in some sort found it, in common lust and common hatred, and for all eternity in some sort they possess it—a multitude, did I call them? nay, not even a herd, but rather a bundle so dead, so incapable of all good, such mere refuse of humanity, incapable of winning pity either from God or man, pitiful only in respect to what they might have been. The only multitude upon which the God of infinite mercy can have no compassion. For one or other company we have been hitherto qualifying ourselves. It is as yet open to us to qualify for either.

8. SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

FALSE PROPHETS

“Beware of false prophets, for they come to you in sheep’s clothing, but within they are ravening wolves.”
—*St Matt.* vii. 15.

OUR Blessed Lord had spoken already in this same chapter (v. 6) of dogs and swine, the openly bad. “Give not that which is holy to dogs: neither cast ye your hearts before swine.” He now speaks of hypocrites, wolves in sheep’s clothing. Some of the Fathers have understood this to refer to heretics. St John Chrysostom interprets it of bad Catholics who speak the language of virtue and religion, and externally conform themselves to the easier practices, and he says that they are found out by their works, inasmuch as the labours of the Christian life are so serious that they cannot carry out their deception, except with those who choose to be deceived.

Our Lord says that we shall know these wolves in sheep’s clothing by their works, evil trees by their fruit, but certain conditions are necessary on our part for their detection. We must have a standard of belief and action wherewith to test

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

these fruits, and it is not enough that there should be this standard in the Catholic Church, but we, individually, must have embodied it in our lives, and made it our own. Men do not gather grapes of thorns or figs of briars, but, in order to be convinced of this, we must have some idea of the character of grapes and figs, or we may think we find them in the natural produce of the thorn or the briars.

There never was a time when there was more dispute as to what is good fruit and what is bad. There is, of course, admittedly poisonous fruit; then there is a great mass of fruit which is in a *certain sense*, not the sense of the Gospel, good. If you are satisfied with the sloe and the blackberry, and have known nothing better, you may think them grapes and figs, and call them so. Everything that God has made is good. What are called natural virtues, i.e., virtues whose acts are done without any sort of reference to Almighty God, are good in themselves except so far forth as they involve a withdrawal of the service which God demands of us. If the outward form of man is beautiful, how much more beautiful is his moral nature and its spontaneous growth, whenever this escapes the blight of sin! It is the rich ground which God has begun to prepare to be His garden, and even its uncultivated growths have their beauty; but grapes and figs are eminently the fruits of laborious cultivation, the figures of supernatural virtue. It is of this fruit alone that the Master desires to eat; it is this fruit alone that is capable of being garnered for eternal life.

Those whose works fail altogether of this super-

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

natural end are not safe guides or safe examples. It may sound harsh to call them wolves, but certainly they have no right to the sheep's clothing. It is obvious that we must have this supernatural standard clearly before us, or we shall fail to detect the shortcoming of such specious fruits. Hence the good of reading the lives of the saints.

The world outside the Church has almost succeeded in banishing God from its thoughts. It worships nature in the language and with the ritual of Christianity, and its preachers and prophets are all about us—nay, this nature-worship, this godlessness, is to such an extent in the air that we, numbers of us, have almost unconsciously and in spite of ourselves, in a measure, become its preachers. We are all preachers—prophets of one sort or another on various texts. Indeed, the preacher who ascends the pulpit is so far disarmed; everybody knows that he is preaching. Our lives preach though we cannot put two ideas together. Our influence upon one another. I am only following St John Chrysostom in turning “Beware of false prophets” into “Beware, ye false prophets.”

The horrible frustration of Redemption, of perfection, wrought by these false prophets. How can such face the Redeemer or hope for Redemption? Prayer and the reading of the lives of the saints is necessary to save us not merely from the snares of false prophets, but from playing the part of false prophets ourselves.

9. EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

ON ALMSGIVING

“ I say to you : Make unto you friends of the mammon of iniquity, that when you shall fail, they may receive you into everlasting dwellings.”—*St Luke* xvi. 9.

“ IF you have not been faithful in that which is another’s, who will give you that which is your own ? ” (*St Luke* xvi. 12.)

“ Scarcely amongst seculars, even amongst kings, will you find superfluity with respect to their estate. Hence there is scarcely anyone who is bound to give alms, since the obligation only extends to superfluities.” (12 Prop. damn. Innoc. XI.)

Lay down certain cases in which people, as a general rule, are bound, under pain of mortal sin, to give alms. We are bound to give out of our superfluity, i.e., from that which is over and above what is necessary for our condition of life, to those in serious want, unless we see others there to help them, and in extreme necessity, i.e., imminent danger of death or serious illness, we are bound to succour them even out of what is in some sort necessary to our condition of life.

And now I would have you observe that St Alphonsus is only laying down what is of absolute

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

obligation, that is to say, the least that we must do. The excuse of those who argue that they have no superfluity. The condemned proposition. There is no exact proportion laid down for our alms, that is to say, our Blessed Lord has not chosen to impose a tax upon us. He has thrown Himself upon our generosity. He has said the poor are always with you, and again, "inasmuch as you show mercy to the least of these you show it unto Me."

Moreover, we know that people who ignore, upon whatever plea, the duty of charity to their distressed neighbours, will never be allowed to see their Master's face. (Matt. xxv.) Observe, they are sent into everlasting fire for their neglect of what few people are in the habit of regarding as a strict duty.

Just before His Passion, He made the poor His heirs when St Mary Magdalen anointed His feet, and Judas complained that it had not been given to the poor. He, as it were, excused Himself. The poor you have always with you, but Me you have not always. When our hearts are fullest of gratitude towards our Redeemer, He bids us turn to His poor who are always with us. St Augustine calls the poor the feet of Jesus. Those feet which St Mary Magdalen kissed and anointed with precious ointment, we cannot kiss, but we can spend our love and devotion, if we have any, as well or better upon the poor of Christ. How do we give alms? Very ungraciously, as if we were doing a great favour.

Not content with appealing to our love in this Gospel, Christ appeals to our self-interest. Make

to yourselves friends, make a good use of that which is entrusted to you, of that which is not your own, and you shall be received into eternal dwellings. Use well that which is not your own, which you cannot really keep, and you shall have that which no one can take from you. What charity does! What blessings it procures! How even when given by one out of God's grace it inclines Him to give His grace! How many conversions are attributable to the prayers obtained by almsgiving!

If there is one thing which our Lord seems to have set His heart upon, it is that we should be kind to the poor. He will have nothing to do with us on any other terms, and He has promised that the least thing we do for them shall not lose its reward.

10th Sunday after Trinity

10. NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

OUR LORD WEEPING OVER JERUSALEM

“ And when he drew near, seeing the city, he wept over it, saying : If thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are to thy peace, but now they are hidden from thy eyes.”—*St Luke xix. 41.*

OUR Lord is recorded to have wept twice—once at the death of Lazarus, once over Jerusalem. He mourned over Lazarus for the love that He bore him and for His sympathy with those who mourned him. He mourned over Jerusalem through His love for it, and through His pity for those who mourned not for themselves.

Our Lord's patriotism, the beauty of Jerusalem, its fate, its punishment for not knowing the time of our Lord's visitation. “ The kite in the air hath known her time: the turtle and the swallow and the stork have observed the time of their coming, but my people have not known the judgment of the Lord.” (Jerem. viii. 7.) He was daily teaching in the temple: our Lord's words are deeds, and His deeds words. He uses the destruction of Jerusalem as a figure of the destruction of the world, and now that He weeps over it, His eyes

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

see more than it and its future ruin: He sees the ruin of all sinners who share in the sin of its rejection of Him.

The soul is the city of God: Christ is the wall and bulwark: the angels are the guard. This mortal life is man's day. Brutes have not a day, for they have not free-will. They necessarily live in God's day. Man has a day which is at his own disposal. If he does not employ it in providing for eternity, he is not caring for the things that are to his peace, before they are hidden from his eyes. Necessity of faith. Importance of bulwarks, good practices persevered in, the omission of which does not necessarily involve sin but danger.

Character of the final ruin which shall overtake the sinner. The day shall come, not thy day any longer, but God's day, a great and terrible day. And then enemies shall cast a trench about thee, the demons shutting thee in with them, and shutting thee out from God; and will shackle thee on every side (in all human troubles there is some door of escape, or at least some aspect of comfort), and beat thee flat to the ground, and thy children who are in thee. All thy thoughts and projects, thy abortive attempts at better things, the ideal of life, which, though not acting up to, you still in some sort cherished, as it is said in the Psalms, "then all their thoughts shall perish." They shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone. Once thou wert the temple of God, and, though long abandoned by His spirit, still as long as thou wert on earth, at least a possible temple, at least preserving the form of a dwelling, now a mere mockery, like those wretched sides of rooms one

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

sees where they are pulling down old houses to make room for new streets.

Now there is something good in the worst of us; our hearts may be inwardly rotten, but we who are fathers and mothers know how to give good gifts to our children; we priests can give good advice to our people; we all of us in spite of ourselves drink in something of the good atmosphere of the Church. We can take thought for the peace of others. (How excellently we can talk and feel about the dead.)

What is the cause of this ruin and corruption of ours? All corruption is from within outwards; what comes out from a man defiles him. Our heart should be a *domus orationis*. We have made it a den of thieves, for all that withdraws it from God is a thief; we have admitted the traffic of the world into the sanctuary of God. We have turned a deaf ear to Him.

11. TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN

“To some who trusted in themselves as just, and despised others, He spoke this parable.”

—*St Luke* xviii. 9.

How far does this parable apply to us? It is addressed “to certain persons who trusted in themselves as just, and despised others.” This is the superscription: do we acknowledge it? We are inclined, all of us, to repudiate it.

Causes of this—the triumph of Christianity, of the Cross, of humility. The ancient world contrasted with the modern. Men on the whole really more humble, from self-knowledge produced by the knowledge of God. Beyond this, externally more humble from the appeal of Christian example.

Nature of true humility. Its connection with the theological virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity. The world and those who are under its influence will be proud, trusting in themselves and despising others, because without these theological virtues, because without knowledge of God, or knowledge of self. (The two books which will be exhibited to us at the Judgment.)

But although we are proud, we are proud that we

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

are not proud: we are incapable of the naive pomposity of the Pharisee, because beyond the sphere of conversion Christianity has reformed the world's taste; we are incapable of the brutal rudeness of his "as also is this publican." Our manner to him, as to others, is civil, considerate, modest. We are quite contented to leave our merits to speak for themselves, but this is no proof that we trust in them less than the Pharisee did. We mentally dwell upon them as much as he, and, not thanking God for them, we hug ourselves the more. As long as we are let alone and our neighbour keeps his proper place, we can be civil and quiet enough; but only let him in any way be preferred to us, let men's treatment of us in aught fall short of what we think to be our deserts, and we are the Pharisee all over, congratulating ourselves, if not thanking God. When we read the lives of the Saints, and see what humility was with them, we shall understand what we lack. We must recollect that the Saints are not merely sublime enthusiasts to be admired rather than imitated, they are also and mainly Christian philosophers, that is to say, men who have mastered the first principles of Christianity in the most perfect way, and made them part of their lives. The science of the Saints is a practical rather than a speculative science; it is a way of walking, of living according to the first principles of Christianity, and its main characteristic is a boundless humility.

The Saint is to himself the worst of sinners, because (1) he attributes whatever good he perceives in himself to God; (2) he attributes whatever evil

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

or absence of good he perceives to himself. His own sins and imperfections are always before him, and as to those of others, he is not only too charitable, but too wise, to attempt to judge of them on mere external *data*. God alone seeth the heart; the one heart *he* sees is his own, and, in the light of God's presence, every slightest infidelity is brought out in the fiercest relief. The lowest place at God's table fits him best because there is no lower. (St Francis Borgia at the feet of Judas.) See page 113.

On the other hand, with us our nearest approach to humility is what a great spiritual writer calls humility with a hook. The two wicked sons of the high priest Eli, Ophni and Phineas, were in the habit of putting in a hook and plucking out the choicest joints from the sacrifice which the people were offering to God. What little good is in us belongs to God; when we take credit to ourselves for any, we are purloining God's offerings. We are sitting at God's table in this life, not according to our real merits, but according to every variety of false seeming. But the Master will come down in His good time, and justice shall be done, and all false weights and measures broken.

God grant we may all have a seat, however low, at His table in heaven. What a shifting of places will be then, even amongst the saved! what sweet surprises! what sharp disappointments! These last will not be more than momentary pangs to the just, a portion of their Purgatory, for the justice of God, as well as His mercy, is the eternal Sabbath of the Blessed.

Surely the greatest blessing that I can wish myself and you is that our sins may be ever before

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

our eyes, and that our good works may be only made known to us in the Judge's welcome: "Come ye blessed of My Father, and inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave Me to eat; thirsty, and you gave Me to drink."

12. ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

ON HEARING THE WORD OF GOD

"He hath made both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak."—*St Mark vii. 37.*

WE should not ignore the fact that the hearing of sermons is an integral part of our religious duty as Christians.

The great stress laid by the Church upon the duty of preaching, incumbent on every priest with the care of souls, evidently imposes the corresponding duty on congregations (as wholes) of attending sermons. The Council of Trent urges bishops, to whom the office of preaching properly belongs, either to preach themselves, or through the instrumentality of the inferior clergy, not only on all Sundays and solemn feasts, but also every day, or certainly three times a week, during the seasons of fasting, Lent and Advent. (Conc. Trid. Sess: 5, cap. 2. Sess: 24, cap. 4.) This, though perhaps never intended to bind to the letter, was amply sufficient to show the spirit of the Church in this matter, and in consequence, after the Council of Trent, preaching became much more frequent among the parochial clergy than formerly. Before

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

that Council (A.D. 1541-65), the parish priest did not nearly as generally as now deliver what we call sermons: he said Mass for his people, administered the Sacraments, and was ready to instruct such individuals as might require instruction: but the chief preachers for the three centuries preceding the Reformation in our own country, for instance, were the members of the two orders founded specially for this purpose, the Franciscans and the Dominicans, who came from their convents with hearts inflamed by long meditation on the things of God, and with souls trained by a severe course of ascetic discipline to that perfect self-forgetfulness, which gave their words a peculiar efficacy. Sermons, then, in those days were certainly more rare, and in proportion of a higher order. Those only preached who seemed marked out by their peculiar fitness for that office; now, however, almost every secular priest, especially in this country, *has* to preach. Even if sermons were not more rare in old times in proportion to the number of the congregations, they certainly were more rare in proportion to the number of priests, so that the choice was much greater. If the English parish-priest of those days did not feel himself equal to the task of preaching, he could easily call in either one of the numerous secular priests without cures, or a friar from a neighbouring convent, as is the way indeed in Catholic countries at the present day; and the congregation might well find fault with its parish-priest if he did not provide them with a good sermon, either in his own person, or by means of another. Now, however, the numbers of the clergy, secular and

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

regular, in this country is so disproportionate to the necessities of the faithful, that many, quite incapable of preaching, are obliged to preach, and many too, capable under other circumstances of preaching well, are prevented by stress of occupation from making the necessary preparation.

Nevertheless the Church in this country obliges every priest with the care of souls to preach at least once on the Sunday, and specially desires that he shall do so even more frequently. Hence sermons are very numerous, and very poor, and people, unable completely to ignore the duty of listening to sermons, as a general rule acknowledge it to be a disagreeable duty they would willingly dispense with. So true is this that parish-priests have very generally adopted the plan of preaching in the middle of the Mass, as it was found impossible either to bring a congregation together for a sermon before Mass, or to keep them for one after. And so far from this dislike of sermons being peculiar to the lukewarm and worldly, it is on the contrary often found amongst the very best part of a congregation—those who are in the habit of approaching the Sacraments frequently, and of being daily present at Mass. This is not unnatural; indeed many sermons are neither interesting nor instructive; not that they are absolutely devoid of either interesting or instructive matter, but that from their manner and form they are certainly inferior in this point to the mass of spiritual books within reach of most of their hearers. Moreover, as a general rule, they gain nothing in simplicity. Yet, it is notorious that there is nothing an English congregation objects to more

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

than a sermon out of a book: it feels that there is something almost dishonest in a priest's going into the pulpit, and only doing for his hearers what each one of them might do for himself at home. Hence, every priest with the care of souls feels himself obliged to give an original sermon at least once a week, probably twice, and his congregation finds itself obliged to listen to him.

It becomes, then, a question of some importance, in what spirit are we to attend sermons? for if we go to sermons "in order to be interested or amused, or to hear what this man or the other has to say for himself," we shall generally be disappointed, and, for all the good we shall get, we might as well have stayed at home. Probably we leave the Church in a bad humour, because the sermon has been so long: we complain that the preacher has done nothing but say the same thing over and over again, or that he has told us nothing more than we had learnt long ago in the Catechism. Surely this is not the effect contemplated by the Fathers of Trent, when they insisted upon the importance of sermons; nor did they suppose that the majority of sermons would be in themselves really worth hearing. How are we, then, to account for this anomaly? Is it to be ascribed entirely to the progress of civilisation since that time, to the general spread of education, to the increase of printed books, and the like? This cannot be, for, were it so, the Church, in her wisdom, would assuredly have abrogated, or considerably modified, this point of her discipline. But we see on the contrary that there is scarcely anything she insists upon more strongly than the duty of

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

frequently preaching, and consequently of hearing sermons, in spite of the difficulties in its way, and she allows no plea of exemption upon superior education.

Obviously then the fault must be in ourselves. We evidently do not attend sermons in the spirit contemplated by the Council of Trent; we are much too apt to forget altogether that, if a sermon has a human side which is often poor and contemptible, it has also a supernatural side, which should always command our respect. The priest who can scarcely utter a sentence without breaking down, who is so wearisome in his repetitions, is the legitimate successor of those who were bidden go and teach all nations, and he is heir to their promises. The Word of God in sermons is a sacramental, and hence has a peculiar power of its own of giving grace, which is independent of accidental circumstances, and only needs an honest will on our part to take effect. It is the Word of God, not the word of man, and the work of conversion is effected not by the oratorical gifts of the speaker, but by the strength of that supernatural mission which all preachers of the Word share equally.

This of course does not mean that natural gifts are not often used by Almighty God towards supernatural ends, but only that where these natural gifts are wanting, the essential virtue of the Word of God remains. We have no authority for supposing that the best sermons, the most striking and original, have been those that have done the greatest work. Was the sermon that sent St Anthony into the desert an eloquent one? We cannot tell: the name of the preacher is not

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

preserved to us. The saint's own account is that the mere enunciation of the Gospel text: "If thou wouldst be perfect, sell all that thou hast and give it to the poor, and come and follow Me" was the instrument of his conversion. God in His Providence chooses methods such as these in order to show us that He is the Giver of all good gifts, and especially those of the supernatural order such as conversion, and that all the highest efforts of man, even when inspired by grace, and supernaturally directed, are but the occasions which He chooses at His pleasure for the effecting of His all-wise ends.

We are in the habit of complaining that sermons are but endless repetitions of the same thing. This is true enough; after all, the truths of Christianity are limited in number, and in their general practical aspect they are still more so. Have we forgotten the oft-repeated sermon of the beloved disciple that so wearied the people of Ephesus? They had seen St John mount the pulpit day after day, and had heard him say each time these simple words: "Little children, love one another"; surely he must have repeated himself very often before they could have wearied of that holy old man, whose very presence must have been an inexhaustible sermon. They asked him why he said the same words over and over again: and he answered, because these words contain all that is necessary. Sermons must to a great extent repeat one another, nay, the same sermon must repeat itself. We must not then go to sermons expecting, as a rule, to gain information. It is this desire that so frequently actuates Protestants,

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

and drives them about from one preacher to another. "I am ready to sit under any one who can give me information," an intelligent Protestant once said. Among the most unsuccessful of sermons must be reckoned the sermon of St Paul to the Athenians, who seem to have been moved solely by their desire of novelty; they were eager to hear any new thing. (Acts xvii. 21.)

But we ought to say to ourselves: "I am going to hear the same old and familiar truths; that our Lord led a painful life and died a painful death for my sake, and calls upon me, if I will be His disciple, to take up my cross, and follow Him; that the interests of this world as such are all vanity, and that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand; that I am growing older every day, and that every day brings me nearer to eternity—a simple truth, but one which I manage most effectually to ignore. I heard all this at my mother's knee; indeed it was part of the instruction for my first Confession: but can I really say that I have ever learnt what has hitherto exercised so little influence on my life? I am now going to put myself for a time beyond the reach of the world's voice, so clamorous around me in my daily avocations, and charged with a burden so diverse. I am going where I shall hear God's truth, feebly set forth perchance, but still God's truth. I am conscious that God is true and every man a liar, that the world's voice, loud as it is, is a lie, but yet I feel that from its constant echo it is hard for me not to believe it, or at any rate not to succumb to it. I am determined to give God's voice a chance. May He, in His mercy, grant that His Word may have its effect upon me."

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

Undoubtedly the reason why the Church to-day insists so much upon sermons is that she has realised the growing tendency altogether to ignore the things of God, and, in consequence of the decay of faith, the necessity that people should be constantly reminded of the great supernatural truths of Christianity, and of the reality of their eternal interests. Let us, then, like dutiful children, cheerfully acquiesce in this provision of Holy Church, and, if the worst come to the worst, and the sermon contain nothing practical, or conducive to the devotion of even the best disposed, let us bear in mind the old saying, that if the preacher fails, God Himself takes the text, and preaches patience. If we cannot make the sermon an exercise of devotion, let us make it one of willing mortification, and it will be blessed to us in an especial manner.

Preaching was one of the objects St Philip Neri had most at heart. The multitude of sermons he organised is perhaps the most striking point in the reform he instituted. We hear of sermon succeeding sermon at the Oratory in Rome, and being listened to by the same congregation with rapt attention, and we cannot but wonder how he prevailed upon people to submit to such a discipline. He introduced a familiar style of preaching for the very purpose of securing its frequency; he insisted upon all his subjects as far as possible taking their turn, and seems to have thought less about the quality of sermons than about their quantity. The truth is, he had kindled an ardent devotion to the Word of God as the great instrument in the regeneration of the world, and it was

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

this that made his disciples so earnest both in preaching and in hearing others preach. Sermons had quite an extraordinary attraction for the early Oratorian Fathers, so that they were ever eager, when their own sermons were over, to listen to those of others—and this among preachers is the rarest thing in the world, for, as they say, cooks have but poor appetites. Let us, then, make it our object to think less of the preacher and of the quality of his sermon, and more of the Word of God and the work it is intended to effect in our souls. I have no intention of undervaluing good preaching, or of excusing any neglect or want of preparation on the part of the preacher (to hear a good sermon is indeed a great privilege), but I have been speaking of sermons as part of God's ordinary dispensation. I am not supposing that a habit, such as I have suggested, can be acquired without a considerable effort, and a great deal of patience, but I am convinced that it would be very useful. No one is likely to attempt its acquisition who is not desirous to make the most of every spiritual opportunity, and there must inevitably be many who will attend sermons not only without profit, but even with loss. But with really good people this need never be.

Never sit down to hear a sermon without saying an *Ave* for the preacher, as well as for yourselves. It is often a more trying task for him than for you; he is often oppressed with the feeling that he has to speak from a position which he does not really occupy. He has to denounce faults in you in which he is only too conscious of sharing; and when, as in duty bound, he turns from this

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

thought, and endeavours to forget himself in the mission with which he is charged, he is exposed to the danger at which the Apostle seems to hint, when he expresses his fear lest, after having preached to others, he should himself become a castaway, of acquiescing in an entire want of conformity between his sentiments and his practice, and of gradually falling into that state of almost hopeless tepidity from which few have ever risen. (1 Cor. ix. 27.)

13. TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

OUR CHRISTIAN ADVANTAGES

“Blessed are the eyes that see the things which you see. For I say to you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see the things that you see, and have not seen them; and to hear the things that you hear, and have not heard them.”—*St Luke* x. 23, 24.

GOD gives to every one graces with which, if he co-operates, he may attain to eternal life. But He does not give the same amount of grace, whether internal or external, to everyone. It is more difficult for some to save their souls than for others. There are certain seasons of especial trial and difficulty, certain others of especial blessing and opportunity. The battle-ground of life is less advantageously laid out for some persons than for others, and it is impossible to assign any reason for this other than the inscrutable Will of Almighty God. Prophets and kings, the most highly favoured and holiest, have desired the advantages which we enjoy, and it has not been granted to them.

Consider the character of this state of spiritual opulence which we enjoy, its responsibility, and its dangers.

We have the faith, we have the Sacraments, we

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

have the abiding presence of our Lord in the Holy Eucharist, we live in times of peace. We have no obstacle to the free practice and enjoyment of our religion, except our own laziness. We have, the most of us, been brought up in the Catholic faith, and have had good Catholic example set us all our lives. We have had that most precious safeguard, the practice of confession. And on all sides our lives are set round about with religious blessings of one sort or another.

And now what sort of spectacle do you think we present to the many generations of our brethren who are in heaven, amongst whom are those many prophets and kings who have desired to see and hear the things that we are seeing and hearing? In heaven now there are many who have never belonged externally to the Catholic Church, who never have had the opportunity or necessary knowledge given them, but who, with no other Sacrament but that of Baptism, with no other instruction but their Testament, have turned with their whole hearts to Christ and have died in His favour. How must such persons, who have been so faithful to every faintest ray of Christ's guidance, who have made so much of the crumbs that have fallen from His table, regard us in our sluggish indifference, our alternate neglect and fastidious use of the graces, the tremendous graces, given us?

And then there are those who have been all their lives the victims of an evil education, the course of whose early instruction has been one long course of sin made easy, for whom no room has been made at the table of life except beside thieves

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

and prostitutes; who have grown up criminals, and then perhaps have expiated their crimes upon the scaffold, and at the last have repented and have been gathered to the bosom of the good Shepherd; how shall we look in the eyes of these who, like the penitent thief on the Cross, have not known Christ so long and yet have loved Him so well, we in whom such long knowledge has bred so little love?

Again, look back a few years in the history of the Church in this country, and you find Catholic churches few and scattered, and the opportunities of the Sacraments few and far between, yet you would have seen persons, even aged and infirm, walking long distances to get to the Sacraments, so zealous, so eager not to lose any opportunity were they. Then it was the people who pursued the priest, now it is the priest who pursues the people. Go back still further, two hundred years or so, and you find the Catholic religion proscribed and persecuted, and Catholics clinging to it and to its practices with a tenacity that won the admiration of all to whom conscience is anything more than a name. In those days it was death for a priest to say Mass, death to hear it; to persevere in hearing it involved an increasing series of fines under which the largest estates gradually melted away, and which as often as not ended on the scaffold. And yet nothing could keep the priests from offering the Holy Sacrifice, and the Catholic laity from assisting at it, whenever an opportunity was given in secret chambers or in the dead of night. Your Catholic forefathers assisted at those tremendous mysteries to which we have to coax so

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

many of you, and from which you would fain be held excused because forsooth you would sooner lie in bed, or take a walk, until the doors of the neighbouring public-house are open.

Many prophets and kings have desired to see the day when daily Mass and frequent Communion was a possibility, and they might at any hour of the day step out of the glare and bustle of the world into the sacramental presence of their Master, and empty their care-laden hearts before him. They were prophets, for their life was in the future, because they dwelt upon that peace and fullness which we are enjoying upon earth, but which for them was laid up in heaven. They were kings, for they were so dauntless in adversity, because loving God alone they were monarchs with the world beneath their feet. I am afraid there is but little of prophet or king about us. Like the Jerusalem over which Christ wept, we know not the things that concern our peace, and for valour, for anything that savours of kingliness in our service of God, I know not where to look for it. The better sort among us who do not neglect our religion, would seem to have harnessed it as a sort of extra horse in the world's chariot. It is a comfort as far as it goes, and it does not interfere with other nice things. This is not the sort of religion to wear well when trouble comes. It is not generous or kingly, nay, it is not manly (and manliness is common to man and woman) to use the religion which is the issue of Christ's Blood as part of the heterogeneous stuffing of a bed upon which we may sleep in the world's arms.

People with heart disease are told that they must

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

never make an effort. It would seem that we had allowed ourselves to be persuaded that we had got heart disease, that our spiritual welfare demanded that we should never make another effort as long as we lived. Unfortunately our Lord says the kingdom suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away. The only heart disease that most of us have is the very common one called sloth and cowardice, and this is not increased, but remedied, by effort. We have so many of God's good things within such easy reach, that we are tempted to think that we can dispense with exertion.

Real prayer is exertion, and prayer is necessary in order to assimilate and use the spiritual food we receive. It is dangerous to eat much and to assimilate little. I often wonder what would be the effect of persecution upon all of us. The man who does not come to Mass of a Sunday or receive the Sacraments—would he come, think you, if it were made penal? For the most part certainly not; on the whole persecution would break off such persons from the Church, as frost does rotten branches. But on the other hand, if persecution, concerning which I am speculating, is to be like its predecessors, I should expect to see this phenomenon, the conversion of a certain proportion of evil livers, amongst those probably who had not abused so many graces as their neighbours. Here and there from the benches of the public-house, and from even uglier haunts of unhappiness and vice, would move up to the front as claimants of the martyr's crown, men and women hardly known to be Catholics at all. They will come up, I say, and they will be wanted to fill the gaps

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

which defection will leave in the ranks of frequent communicants. Upon whose soul did the Divine mercy first satiate itself after the loss of Judas, the priest and apostle—was it not that of the penitent thief? God grant it may not be our defection for which these new-comers will have to supply!

In the history of the forty martyrs of Sebaste, we read that they were exposed naked upon a frozen pond during a winter's night, with a warm shelter close by to which they might betake themselves whenever they chose, as a sign of apostasy. One of their heathen guards saw a band of angels hovering over them with crowns, but to his surprise he saw that there were only thirty-nine. Presently this was explained by one betaking himself to the warmth. The soldier, moved by divine grace, at once stripped himself, and laid down beside them, declaring himself a Christian, and so the fortieth crown was secured. Who, judging as men judge, could have detected the future wearer of the fortieth crown of martyrdom in the person of this guard? It is only God Who knows what is in man. One point is, I think, clear: that we who have had the leaves of our moral nature opened by the sunshine and dew of God's grace, are in a much worse state when once we allow ourselves to be infected by the blight of sin, than those who have not learnt to think and feel as we have, and whose sins, therefore, however grievous in themselves, have a far slighter and more superficial character than ours. The frost or the blight that comes when the rose is still folded tightly up in the bud, whatever ugly marks it may leave upon the outermost fold, often allows the after-development of

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

a goodly flower. But when once the flower has opened, every leaf is pierced by decay. For many of us it is the *novissima hora*, the last hour of grace. God may have said His last word to us, short of a miraculous interposition for which we cannot look. Not that He may not repeat that word, but there will be nothing new, nothing that we have not already heard and appreciated.

O prophets and kings, who have desired to see what we see, and to hear what we hear, intercede for us that we may see and hear to our salvation, and not to our eternal loss.

14. THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE TALENT IN A NAPKIN

"Lord, I know that thou art a hard man; thou reapest where thou hast not sown, and gatherest where thou hast not strewn."—*St Matt.*, xxv. 24.

THESE are the words put in the mouth of the unworthy servant, who, having one talent, concealed it in a napkin, instead of using it in his master's service. His plea comes to this: "You are one whom it is impossible to understand or to count upon; all my business prospects may be upset by your sudden and unexpected demands: I cannot afford to break my heart in your interest, and then to be thrown over at the last."

Now parables are vivid pictures for the purpose of enforcing some truth through an appeal to the imagination, and not every point in the picture has directly a spiritual meaning, but some are only for the sake of completing the picture; and so it is important to consider which are meant to convey a distinct point of instruction, and which are merely meant for the perfection of the vehicle of instruction, by making the picture more life-like. Many more points on consideration will be seen to have a spiritual meaning than at first sight.

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

Now at first sight, is not this charge which I have chosen for my text merely an illustration of the reckless insolence of an unfaithful servant? It is this of course, but I maintain that it also contains the expression of a truth. Of course it is a distorted truth taken as it stands, and applied directly to the spiritual truth taught; it is equivalent to a charge of injustice against God, and that we know the reprobate cannot make; but still it does represent brutally and fiercely the phenomenon of God's earthly dealing with us. The ways of God are not as our ways. It is impossible to make any satisfactory theory about His providence upon the data which nature yields us. Take this life as the whole record of God's dealings with His creatures, and what other conclusion can we come to but that He is a hard, capricious master, reaping where He has not sown, and gathering where He has not strewn?

This is the feeling which inspires the bitter eloquence of the anti-christian writers when they denounce the cruelty of nature, when they dwell upon the frightful phenomena of famine and plague, the reckless sacrifice of innocent life, the unmerited suffering of children, the triumph of evil, the defeat of good; and though of course when they take this as an adequate presentation of the character of the author of nature they are blasphemous liars, yet their description, so far as it goes, answers to facts.

And in our parable you will observe that the master, so far from denying the charge, in part at least admits it. "Wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sow not, and

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

gather where I have not strewn; thou oughtest therefore to have committed my money to the bankers." What you say has its truth, and so you ought to have done just what you have not. Had it been the whole truth, the slothful servant would have been justified; as it was, its partial truth condemned him.

True, no theory can be made as to God's demands upon us. The innocent suffer, the afflicted have affliction heaped upon them, the noblest projects undertaken for the highest ends are brought to naught. The most innocent god-fearing happiness, rich in the Church's blessing, hedged about with good men's prayers, is blighted utterly, and in a moment, whilst the hard and the careless and the godless go their way rejoicing. This is a picture not of what always, but of what often, happens. But those who live in God's presence and in the presence of their own souls, know that God really never reaps where He has not sown, nor gathers where He has not strewn. Each has sufficient grace for his necessity; the most afflicted are not the most unhappy; even in this life, amongst all its hideous discords and confusions, there are not wanting preludes, as it were, and prophecies of the eternal harmony, the perfect reconciliation of mercy and justice, which shall be in that kingdom where Christ shall reign and with Him all His saints.

If you take the Psalms of David, that wondrous harp upon which Holy Church from the beginning has poured out her soul before God, you will find all the corruption and *prima facie* injustice of this life brought out in the most thrilling manner.

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

There was never yet any sadness or desolation or indignation known to the heart of man which does not find adequate expression in the Psalms; that is the secret of their power of comforting. The Psalmist weeps and glows with us, and then teaches grief and indignation to pray by whispering the name of God, bidding us mark that, amid the fiercest stress of wind and sea, an Almighty Hand is guiding us into the harbour of our hope. The main difference between the sentiment of the Psalmist and that of the unchristian murmurers to which I have referred, is that, whilst these urge that discords are discords and nothing more, the Psalmist insists that they are the preparation for the eternal harmony.

But, you may ask, what after all is the practical truth I suppose to be conveyed in the expression, "reaping where I have not sown," etc.? It is this: God always sows sufficient grace either in itself, or in such a way and measure that, when accepted, it will lead to further graces, sufficient for the harvest He would reap; but graces ignored and refused are practically as though not sown—indeed worse. Thus to everyone who is leading a merely natural life, without any special attention to the end of his creation, even though his life were in other respects innocent, any very keen affliction presents God to him as reaping where He has not sown. God is trying him in proportion to graces which he has been offered, but has not accepted. A man will go on in a quiet indifferent sort of way, as though the flesh was subdued, and the world was converted, and the devil was dead, and suddenly a dreadful temptation assaults him to

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

which he yields, or an overwhelming affliction crushes him to the earth, and he is tempted to exclaim: "O hard master, to take me so unprepared." Unprepared? why the armour was there, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the spirit, but you would not use them. You had been told that the life of man was a warfare upon earth, no isolated battle now and again under formal conditions, but a state of warfare. If you have been living like a civilian instead of a soldier, and so are surprised, you have only yourself to thank! God condescends from time to time to surprise us by an unexpected demand upon our patience and our love, in order that we may not be surprised at the end. There is no provision made for the happiness of the man who will live a merely natural life, either in this life or the life to come; every man who has attained to the use of reason must either rise above nature, or fall below it; must win the immediate vision of God in heaven, or lose all reflection of Him in hell. We are perpetually letting ourselves drift with the current of our nature, and then a great trouble comes and wakes us into a sense of danger, lest we should be swept into the abyss and destroyed, and we begin to use our oars against the stream. So this apparent hardness of our Master is real kindness.

To those who ignore all life but the present, God is a hard master, because it is impossible to understand this life taken out of connection with a life to come. To those who have neglected grace, and have allowed their lives to drift down the current of mere nature, God is a hard master, because they have rejected the seed from which

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

He demands a harvest: but even His hardness is mercy, for He is hard now in order that He may not have to be hard at the last.

It is impossible that we who have lived in the revelation of Christ's love, whatever trials He may think fit to send us, can ever believe Him a hard master. Not content with loving us with that creative love which brooded over the face of the abyss, and wrought the world out of nothing, He must needs love us with the very rhythm of our own affection, the affection of a beating human heart. Not content with knowing our griefs, He must needs feel them too. A hard master! Has He not sown on every side the seed of His Precious Blood? Is there anything He could have done for His vineyard which He has not done? What of ours is not more His than ours? Shall He not do what He will with His own? If He asserts this right suddenly and imperiously, it is for our sakes, that our view of life may be restored to its right focus, that self may fall into the background, and that all other loves may be subordinate to the love of God. *Tu solus altissimus, Jesu Christe*: Thou alone the highest, Jesus Christ. God will visit us with keen searching affliction assuredly, each one in our time. Let us say from our hearts with the prophet: "The fig tree shall not blossom, and there shall be no spring in the vines. The labour of the olive tree shall fail, and the fields shall yield no good: the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls. But I will rejoice in the Lord, and I will joy in God my Jesus." (Hab. iii. 17, 18.)

15. FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

ON TEMPTATION

“The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, for these are contrary one to another, so that you do not the things that you would.”

—*Gal. v. 17.*

TEMPTATION is the common lot of all, and since our Lord came not only to save us, but also to set us an example, He was therefore tempted.

Our Lord underwent this discipline not for His own sake, but for ours, in order that we might be prepared to resign ourselves to it, in order to encourage us in time of temptation, to prevent us from losing our peace of mind in it, or from thinking it a sign of God's displeasure, since He spared not His beloved Son in this matter.

The immense importance of realising that all difficulties, trials, and temptations, whatever be their immediate cause, even though it be our own past sin, are really the effect of God's Providence: that sin, the act of sin, is the one thing out of God's Providence of which we cannot say: “God has done this.” But when the sin is over, and we

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

have returned to God, the natural effects of it which remain, however dreadful, such as liability to temptation, weakness, etc., again fall, as it were, into the hands of God's Providence, and, if we will let Him, will be made subservient to our good. Sorrow succeeds joy, lest we should be puffed up by it, and should forget the Giver: joy succeeds sorrow, lest we should sink beneath it, and despair.

Confidence that this should give us.

"Because thou wast acceptable to God, it was necessary that temptation should prove thee." (Tob. xii. 13.)

Our fallen nature and the devil. The devil's price, his knowledge of the soul's value, his realisation of the price paid for it by our Lord.

The absurdity of the cheap rate at which we hold our adversary. How the world ignores him—his name a sort of joke—the devil's policy in this.

The devil's power in the hour of death upon those who have served him during their life. Our contempt for him as for one who has been outwitted: but by whom? By Almighty God: by His servants indeed, but taught by Him. What a chronicle hell would show of the devil's triumphs!

The devil's intimate knowledge of our character. He cannot see our thoughts, as God can, but he guesses them with almost unerring accuracy.

How temptations are piled up! how one plays into another's hands! how of numberless nothings a subtle combination is made, which is wellnigh irresistible. "We could bear anything but this," we say. Indeed the devil has not been studying us for nothing. He has no direct knowledge of

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

future events, as God has, yet he foresees much by his shrewd conjectures; he can look round many a corner, trace many a consequence, of which we can have no idea. Resistance to temptation is to be the work of our lives, and the tempter is the devil.

Our Lord's triple temptation. His example teaches us to resist with promptness.

16. FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

OUR LORD AT THE GATE OF NAIM

“ And He came near and touched the bier ; and they that carried it stood still.”—*St Luke* vii. 14.

THE three dead persons that our Lord is recorded to have raised : (1) The ruler of the synagogue's daughter : “ The girl is dead, why troublest thou the Master ? ” “ The girl is not dead but sleepeth.” (2) The young man of to-day's gospel, who is carried out to be buried. (3) Lazarus, the four-days-dead and buried. St Augustine's interpretation : (1) The sin of the heart not yet brought out into action. (2) The sin completed in act. (3) The sinner entombed in the habit.

Each accomplished sin tends to be a habit. The young man is carried for burial, his evil passions which have caused his death are the bearers, the devil smooths the way for them, and hurries them along it. Compassionate souls that love him may weep, and pray for him ; the Saints and angels may intercede for him, but only one is able to come near, and stop the ghastly procession and raise the young man up.

The touch of God—of various kinds—sickness—

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

anxiety; the rush and hurry of life is quelled. They that carried it stood still: eternity is, as it were, let in upon us.

Prayer—what it can do. The weeping mother represents the church: how the Church pleads for the sinner in her services.

Our Blessed Lady. How necessary prayer is. When he is raised up he began to speak, to pray.

Our salvation depends upon our estimate and use of prayer. All prayer an act of faith, hope and charity.

The world despises prayer, because it has neither faith, hope nor charity.

The tenderness of St Augustine's commentary on this Gospel shows that he had in his mind that he was the child of prayer, whose mother, as he acknowledges so lovingly, having born him into the world, bore him yet again to God by her prayers.

Prayer the most powerful agent in the world, although the world does not believe this.

17. SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

HUMILITY

“ When thou art invited, go, sit down in the last place ; that when he who invited thee cometh, he may say to thee : Friend, go up higher.”—*St Luke* xiv. 10.

HUMILITY—the virtue which is the result of the knowledge of God and of yourself. It is the foundation of all Christian virtues. It is the same as the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning or the foundation of wisdom.

Natural virtues are courses of action directed to the attainment of some end, intrinsically excellent and beautiful, precisely for the excellence and beauty's sake, without any reference to God. Sometimes God's glory is the implicit end of action which is not formally directed to it. This is the case with the ordinary actions of good Christians, and may sometimes be the case with those who are not Christians, who only know God as the author of nature. But very frequently natural virtues are degraded to mere self-seeking, and the excellence is sought as a feather for our own cap.

Natural virtues are to be exceedingly prized, especially for this, that they afford the ordinary

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

basis of supernatural virtues. Courage and fidelity, for instance, only require that they should be properly directed to the service of God to merit the confessor's, if not the martyr's, crown.

But humility, although it is not counted as one of the theological virtues with faith, hope and charity, as dealing immediately with Almighty God, yet is essentially supernatural; it is not a natural virtue, like fortitude or fidelity, elevated to a supernatural end; indeed, as we shall see, it is most closely allied to Faith and Charity, and most really, although not so obviously, to Hope.

To the Pagan world, as has often been observed, humility was not known; there was no name for it even. There was a sort of shadow of it called modesty—a sort of temperance in the quest of praise—but this was of the most meagre kind, and one of the effects of Christian humility upon the world is, that even men who have it not, are ashamed to praise themselves in the unblushing way they used to do before it came into the world. Men in Pagan times had not humility because they had not faith, nor hope, nor charity. They had a faint self-knowledge, sufficient to make them sad, but not sufficient, since it was without the knowledge of God, to make them humble; neither did they love One Whom they did not know, neither did they look or hope for the coming of the Master of the feast, to exalt the humble and abase the proud. But then Christ came, the supreme object of faith, hope and charity, and abased Himself, and took the lowest place, nay, “had no place at all where He might lay His head,” and He showed those who had hearts to appreciate His teaching,

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

that the way to Heaven for sinful man was the way of humility. Faith, and Hope, and Charity are, as it were, great angels ever contemplating the Divine perfections; without ceasing to be what they were, they became incarnate upon earth, and in the incidents of everyday life are called by many names—joy, patience, fortitude, temperance—but the name which fits them closest is humility, so that when we would analyse humility and say exactly what it is, we cannot do so more nearly than by saying that it is Faith, Hope and Charity manifested upon earth by the desire to take the lowest place, as that which fits us best.

But you will say, these theological virtues have reference to God, and choosing the lowest place has reference to our neighbour. This is true, but when we know God, and know ourselves, we have not the heart to prefer ourselves to any one person. We know this, that God, being what He is, has done thus and thus to us, and that we, being what we are, have done thus and thus to Him. It is wonderful that we are invited at all: we only take the seat because there is not a lower.

Then our Lord, accommodating Himself to all the wants of the human heart, reminds us that after all He, the Master, will come, and if there be any injustice anywhere, it shall be set right, nay, that our very just abasement shall weigh with Him as a claim for honour. "Friend, go up higher." Oh, putting aside those who have no seats anywhere, what a shifting of places there will be! Then justice will reign, and all false weights and measures will be utterly destroyed. Alas, how will it then fare with the best of us, with our abused

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

advantages and our pride? Happy for us if we have a place at all, though the lowest. One moment's pang we may have, which will be part of our Purgatory, at seeing ourselves last; but after all God's justice as well as His mercy is the eternal Sabbath of the Blessed

18. SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE COMMANDMENT OF LOVE

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind.”—*St Matt.* xxii. 37.

To whom is this commandment addressed? To Saints? Is it the rule of some very strict religious order? It seems to be so exceedingly high and difficult. It bids us give our *whole* hearts to God, to leave no portion of them for anything else.

And yet it is addressed to *all*. It is laid upon every little heathen child as it comes to the use of reason.

God, as presented to us by human reason, independently of revelation—as the Creator and Governor of all things, and as the supreme sanction of the moral law—has this claim upon us.

The ignorance of the Fall only a partial obscuration. The happiness of the life in Eden lay in the fulfilment of this commandment, and failed at its violation; and in the fulfilment of this commandment will lie the happiness of heaven. It was enunciated in the Mosaic dispensation of preparation, and it is the vital principle of the Christian

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

dispensation, in which man is re-made a child of God and an heir to the kingdom of heaven. It is a survival of the life of Paradise, and an anticipation of the life of heaven, and therefore in our present fallen state it seems so difficult, so reasonable and yet so difficult, because our reason has been dethroned and a rabble of passions have got the upper hand.

This is the commandment which binds all God's creatures to their Creator. It is the commandment which is addressed to the highest seraph. Its language ignores sin, and passion, and temptation, unlike the most of God's precepts to us, such as "thou shalt not steal," which in their form are condescensions to our fallen state, and suppose the violence of temptation.

That it has not been allowed to die entirely out of our hearts, that it has been promulgated so emphatically to us, is a pledge of our future restoration to that perfect harmony which sin has broken. Fallen man's great consolation, that God still condescends to speak to him as to the unfallen angels.

Let us understand that, as the great sky roofs us all in who dwell upon the earth, so this great commandment covers and contains in itself all the other commandments which are merely so many means to its fulfilment; the fulfilment of the law is love.

May it not be said, then, that all the difficulties of the other commandments are contained in this? Hardly so, because it directly applies so much stronger a motive than any other commandment—the goodness and dearness of God. Of course it is

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

difficult, but with grace we can do all things, even love God with our whole heart.

Above all it is necessary we should not be deceived, first in respect to the demand made upon us, second in respect to our fulfilment of it. The commandment does not say: "Thou shalt love Me with an intense love more than wife a husband, or a mother a child"; but simply as it would be quite wrong to love anyone else, with thy whole heart. Theologians have differed as to the application of certain other commandments, some taking a more strict, some a more lenient view; but here the words are such as to admit of no sort of discussion. The world would prefer a compromise, like the false mother before Solomon's judgment seat: "neither for thee nor me, but let the child be cut asunder." (3 Kings iii. 26.) But God demands the whole heart: we shall gain nothing by diminishing the demand on God's side, or by exaggerating the fulfilment on ours. God demands our love, our whole love; not that we should not love others, but this must be in and for God.

God is not content with praise and admiration and reverence; He must have love. We can understand this, for we are made in God's image, and love is dearer to us than any other relation with our neighbour.

Our Lord came down from heaven, and died upon the Cross, to make the fulfilment of this commandment more easy and natural for us. When He cried upon the Cross: "I thirst," He cried for the love of our whole hearts to quench that thirst.

Do not let us persuade ourselves that there is any exaggeration in the terms of this command-

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

ment, or that any compromise is possible. Let us try and make it the great absorbing sorrow of our lives, that we do not love God more. Let us pray before all else for an increase of that love at any cost. If we are overwhelmed by the consciousness of our sinful lives, let us remember that love cleanses from sin, and breaks the force of evil habits as nothing else can. It lays the axe at the root of all vices at once. If only we were to begin to consider as to the ordinary actions of our life what God would like, and try to please Him for love, we should have begun to fulfil this commandment, and should have thrown up against our most familiar habitual sin a solid barrier. And though this commandment is of course very difficult to our fallen nature, yet the least effort will show us that upon the road of love we may look for miracles of grace. It is the easiest road after all, although it seems to go straight up an inaccessible mountain, because there God's grace will carry us as nowhere else, for we are offering to the lips of Christ the one drink that He cares for, and He will not suffer even a cup of cold water to go without its reward.

19. EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE HEALING OF THE PARALYTIC

“ Arise, take up thy bed, and go into thy house.”

—*St Matt. ix. 6.*

PARALYSIS is a destruction of the correspondence of certain portions of our bodily frame with the great centres of action, so that a man more or less loses command over his organs.

Paralysis a very apt figure of sin. The world is a great system in which the movements of the different parts is in correspondence with its centre the sun, whence arises a harmony which the variety of movements only makes more perfect. Man has been called a microcosm, or little world, in reference to his physical organisation. But it is equally true with regard to his moral nature, which is made up of a variety of movements, impulses, appetites (call them what you will), which in his original constitution were subordinated to his reason, that is, to his moral nature. Man's reason reflects, as a mirror, the light of the eternal law and the eternal will of God; we know it best by the name of conscience, but conscience is the name of the moral reason after the fall, and suggests struggle and obscurity, leading to pain and remorse.

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

Now the effect of sin upon the moral system is quite analogous to that of paralysis upon the physical. The sin which brought about the fall, broke up that subordination of the appetites to the reason, and weakened the central power itself by loosening its intercourse with its Creator, and dimming its reflection of the eternal light.

All, even the holiest, are, in accordance with the condition of their fallen nature, more or less paralytic. They are not in sin, but they are suffering from the effects of sin. They have not the full use of their limbs; many of their steps fall short, or turn aside, and their hands do not grasp what they aim at grasping but something else; and thus the author of the Imitation could say: "I have never gone amongst men without coming back less a man," because of the stimulated activity and the contagious feebleness.

But the paralytic of to-day's Gospel represents the sinner who is in an actual state of sin, and by long habits has grown bedridden in his sin. He is carried upon his bed. By whom is he carried? What else can carry the sinner but the grace of Christ? Christ draws him as the magnet draws the iron. He is not cured, but he exceedingly desires his cure.

The four bearers are: (1) knowledge of his own misery; (2) knowledge of God's goodness; (3) hope; (4) (although he hardly knows it) the beginnings of love. And are not these four graces the constituents of the grace of prayer, which is offered to all as the instrument for bringing them to the feet of Jesus? The *elevation* of prayer—the *abasement* of prayer. And so the sick man is at

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

the feet of his Physician, and is not his presence there a prayer, and do not his worn and eager eyes pray, though his lips utter no word?

“Be of good heart, son, thy sins are forgiven thee.” The people about stare with mingled horror and contempt; horror, because they did not account Him to be God, and knew that none but God can forgive sin: contempt, because the man had come to be cured, not to be forgiven; and those bold words could not be brought to book, could not be tested as to their efficacy. But surely it was not so with the sick man. Did he not feel the Physician’s finger touch the very source of all his ill? But something more was needed both for the lookers on, and also to complete the allegory for our instruction.

Our Lord admits their silent challenge, “Arise, take up thy bed, and walk,” is the lesser miracle, but in one sense the more difficult pretension, because it can be tested by the visible event.

“Arise, take up thy bed, and go into thy house.” Grace is by degrees, the first grace before the second. Grace must be acted upon at once: “Arise.” There is a sort of picture of this to many people, to most people I suppose, in the process of getting up in the morning: if we get up the moment the demand upon us is made, it is comparatively easy, afterwards comparatively impossible. A good resolution should be acted upon at once; if we cannot do the precise thing resolved upon, if it cannot be anticipated, let us do something else for God. Regard the grace as a bill which must be turned into money at once, if it is to be of any use.

“Take up thy *bed*.” Do not let your passions

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

carry you any more: rather, you carry them, and force them to go the road of reason. "And go into thy house"—the house of thy heart, of thy conscience. That wretched house of thine, in such disorder and filth, whilst thou art trying to forget thyself and it at some neighbour's or some place of vain amusement; and yet to that house of thine thou must return to die, on thy own bed which thou hast made so ill; all the furniture, all the ornaments which thou hast gathered about thee from thy youth upwards, will be about thee when thou diest. See now that it is orderly and fit. Remember the interior chamber of thy heart will be, substantially as death finds it, thy dwelling for all eternity.

20. NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE MARRIAGE OF THE KING'S SON

“The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a king who made a marriage for his son.”—*St Matt. xxii. 2.*

THE Son of God, having created man, willed to unite Himself in the most intimate way with His creation. The love that was the motive of the creation was the motive of the union of the Incarnation, the hypostatic union, the union of two natures in one person. And the compassion for man in his fallen nature, the love that wrought by pity, was the reason that the union was accomplished in the way that it was, in labour and in anguish through the thirty-three years from Bethlehem to Calvary. It is the hypostatic union and its consequences, the union of grace upon earth and of glory in heaven, that is presented to us under the figure of the marriage which the King made for His Son.

He united Himself to us, He became man, in order to make us participators in the Divine Life by grace and by glory. This is the exchange Christ has made with us in His espousal: He has

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

been encompassed with our infirmity, in order that we might be encompassed with His glory.

Habitual grace, not merely a gift, an assistance, but a state, a condition of being, just as, over and above the gifts of food and medicine, health is a state.

The original state of our first parents, along with sanctifying grace; integrity or freedom from concupiscence, knowledge, a power of seeing God in nature, and of contemplating steadily their supernatural end. Immortality.

The state of fallen nature: 1. Loss of sanctifying grace (favour, sonship, inheritorship of heaven), power of realising in increasing degrees that inheritance by merit. 2. Loss of integrity (rebellion of the passions). 3. Loss of knowledge. 4. Loss of immortality (death, and its sad discipline of pain and disease).

The state of restored nature: 1. Sanctifying grace. 2. Special assistances, more powerful than any that were required before the Fall, in order to counteract the rebellion of the passions and the obscuration of the intellect. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the Blessed Sacrament. 3. Death robbed of its sting by Christ's Passion, Death and glorious Resurrection and Ascension, and presented to us as the gate of life.

The union of grace is spoken of by the Fathers as a participation in the Divine life, in spite of the danger of misunderstanding the expression in a pantheistic sense, when grace is allowed to take full possession of the soul, as in the saints. In its consummation in the union of glory in heaven, the soul lies in the life of God like metal in the furnace,

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

throbbing and glowing with the fire's life, and this absorption in the Divine life of the Blessed explains the way in which we worship them, without any fear that we are thereby detracting from the worship due to God, Whom we worship in the Saints.

The union of Christ with communicants—a union which is more than a union of grace, and is an anticipation of the union of glory; not content with preparing us on earth for the union in heaven by grace, our Lord must needs throw Himself into our arms, as though He could not wait. The Blessed Sacrament is the summary and representation of all that God has done for us by grace, and will do for us in glory. The memorial of the Passion, and the pledge and anticipation of heaven. Our Lord comes to us with all this wealth of grace and glory, and invites us to partake of it, to take our places as citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, at the banquet of grace in this life and of glory in the next; no longer merely to beat out our feeble life, the prey of corruption and death; no longer to suffer the pangs of that miserable day-by-day wearing out, but by partaking in God's life to live for ever.

But by most the invitation is unheeded, by some because they have not faith, by some because they have not heart. We know what it is for a man who is in business to have a great business-opportunity offered him and to neglect it, because, as he says, he has not spirit for it. He will add, perhaps, that he is too old; that it would require a change in his whole way of going on. Of course people do not speak thus in so many words of

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

God's invitation, but it is about what it comes to, and we, lukewarm Catholics, have a way of dealing with Almighty God and His invitation which is quite our own. Do you know what bees do when some inconvenient object is intruded into their hive too large for them to push out? They cover it with wax, so that it looks like the rest of the hive's furniture, and then they ignore it: the current of the hive's life flows round it and over it, and it is almost as though it was not. So it is with the most of us. We acknowledge God's invitation; we assume that we are somehow or other accepting it, and then we forget all about it; it is too large a part of the Catholic faith to discard, so we first assimilate it, and then ignore it; whereas if this great marriage be a reality, surely it should be the absorbing thought of our lives to take our part in it worthily. But old age overtakes us—the worst sort of old age, that of the heart—the coldness and hardness resulting from the neglect of grace: an old age of the heart, often ripest at that time of life which men count as middle age, for sometimes, although only sometimes, God grants to old age a revival of the unworldliness of childhood, when men note nothing but its unwisdom.

There was a time when men were wild with the notion that an elixir of youth might be obtained, by the use of which a man should never grow old. The alchemist thought that it was in some way connected with that supreme object of their desires, the discovery of how to transmute base metals into gold. The two would be found together, wealth and the means to enjoy it worthily. I

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

think this fancy of the alchemists contains a picture of what is true. There is an elixir of youth, an elixir of eternal life, and it is the love of God. If you want a recipe for preventing the real old age, the old age of the heart, coming upon you, love God and unite yourself with Him Who, although the ancient of days, can never grow old, nor suffer the shadow of change. In this union you will find your youth renewed like the eagle's; and moreover, by loving God, by doing what you do for His love, you will have obtained the power of turning everything into gold, all the poor, dull, commonplace actions of life into acts meritorious of eternal life.

But if we do not beat back this terrible old age of worldliness and indifference, which is stealing upon us, if we do not open our hearts persistently to the sunshine of God's love in prayer and almsgiving, it may well be that, when the King comes down to see the guests, we may be found without the wedding-garment of sanctifying grace or charity, although we may be people who have gone to Mass and the Sacraments all our lives. *One* was found to express the solitude of the wicked at the last: he feels himself the one black spot amidst the intolerable brightness of the saints. In his life he was no stranger; "Friend," so our Lord called Judas, although *then* in mercy, *now* in judgment.

Let us understand the alternatives. We are called to be children of God, Spouses of the Holy Ghost, priests and kings, partakers of the Divine Life; and these are titles not merely denoting the miraculous action of the Divine mercy, but a

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

vehement and persistent co-operation on our side. And if we are not all this, we are simply outcasts; if we will not lie within the arms of God, there is no place for us short of that exterior darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

21. TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE SHADOW OF DEATH

“Lord, come down before that my son die.”

—*St John* iv. 49.

It is so hard to die, so mean, so pitiful looked at naturally, to cease to be a man and become a thing. But death is so common, so gradual, that unless it touches ourselves or those very near and dear to us, we acquiesce in it without much notice. The circle of those we know by sight or report changes gradually, even as philosophers tell us our own bodies change: change utterly in the course of a few years, and we ignore the one process, as we ignore the other. But from time to time it is brought home to us, either in our own person, as it was with King Ezechias, when the prophet said to him: “Thus saith the Lord God, give charge concerning thy house, for thou shalt die, and not live” (4 Kings xx. 1), or in the person of someone dear to us, the shadow of whose imminent death falls upon our lives, and seems to choke all the light out of them; then did we know of any Lord Who might be prevailed upon to come down and deliver death’s prey from his hand, we should all seek him at any cost or labour.

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

That we should die, or should live, is nothing to the world about us; what is a single item more or less in the week's bill of mortality? But for us, as we turn our faces to the wall, or bow them over our dying friend, this death is everything. *Then* we have acquiesced in the general law that man must die, and we have borne with equanimity the various changes in our human surroundings, but *now*: "O Lord, come down before that my son die."

What sublime egotism! who art thou, or who is thy son, that any exception should be made for thee or for him? This is the sort of rebuke that the world addresses to prayer, and by so doing strikes at the very root of the relations between the Creator and His rational creature. God, instead of making us individuals, might have made us portions of a great machine, in which the parts have no interests independent of the whole. But now He has made us each one for Himself primarily, only secondarily for each other. Of course we are all made for the ultimate end of God's glory, but He wills that glory to be achieved by each primarily through a wise self-interest: "what doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?" We must ever under God love ourselves best. When we are bidden love our neighbour as ourselves, it is not meant that we should love him as much as ourselves, but that we should love him with the same sort of love. God Himself never presents to us the duty of loving Him, without at the same time showing us how the loving Him involves the highest love of self. Each individual interest has its right; each individual voice has a claim to be heard

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

at the throne of grace, and will assuredly be listened to amid the wildest din.

Ask, do not be afraid of asking; ask what you will, only acknowledge that God knows best, and will do what is best, will grant all that is really good in what you ask, and will supply for that which in your own interests He refuses, with something a thousandfold better.

Do not criticise too much your own dispositions. The father in to-day's Gospel might certainly have had better. He is at once exacting in his demands, and inadequate in his conception of what our Lord can do. He presents a marked contrast to the centurion, with his wonderful compound of faith and humility: "Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof, but only speak the word, and my servant shall be healed." But for this man our Lord must come down, and at once, or it will be too late. But he was at least in earnest, and his prayer was heard.

The imminence of death to ourselves, or to those dear to us, is enough to drive us to God's feet, but there is a worse death than that of the body. The death of the body merely marks an end to the first chapter of life. The soul survives, and in its survival retains the pledge of the resurrection of the body, for the soul is imperfect without the body; ultimate reunion with it is its due. But the soul which has once lost its supernatural life, the life of grace by mortal sin, has destroyed itself so far as it is concerned for ever; it retains no sort of claim to, no sort of pledge of, recovery. But you will say: "Is there not the Sacrament of Penance and Christ's promise of forgiveness to such as avail

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

themselves of it? ” But of what avail is the Sacrament of Penance without conversion of heart, and this conversion is a grace which we have no claim to—a perfectly gratuitous gift of God—and though it is an everyday mercy of Almighty God, yet it is simply true that He is no more called upon to convert a sinner who has deliberately broken away from Him by mortal sin, than He was called upon to create this earth upon which we stand. We have no more claim to restoration after mortal sin than a man who, having taken his passage in a vessel, should throw himself off into the seething water in the dead of night. He has brought his life to an end, he is dead and buried. This is the death we ought to fear for ourselves and for others: “ Lord, come down before that my son die.”

Prayer the great means of prevention—“ He was beginning to die ”—the beginning of the end. Difficult to see this beginning of death in ourselves, easier in others. God alone can see it absolutely: we ought to be anxious. Prayer is the one means of recovery, the first grace the use of which is essential to any further grace.

Do we believe this? the deadliness of sin, and the necessity of prayer? Supposing a house were on fire, and the owner on being informed of the fact were to answer: “ I do not at all dispute the truth of what you are saying,” and then were to go on sitting quietly in his armchair: what conclusion should we draw from his conduct? We should say that he does not believe what is told him, or, if this were impossible, we should at least say: “ He does not realise what is implied in what has been told him.” People do not take in the reality of

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

imminent danger, and then ignore it, or speculate curiously upon it, without taking any precautions. The very moment we are negligent, we begin to die. "O Lord, come down before my soul die." It is my soul that concerns me nearest. The world began by laughing at Christianity as a piece of exaggerated self-sacrifice; now they call it self-seeking and ungenerous. The world and the devil are quite willing that we should take up any plan for saving the souls of others, if only we will neglect our own. When two men who cannot swim, are struggling in the water, they can do one another no good, unless one lays hold of a boat, or a rock, or a friendly rope. Let the poor wretches clutch, under the delusion of saving one another, and we know the result.

Let us help ourselves, and then we may be able to help our neighbour.

22. TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE ARMOUR OF GOD

“ Therefore take unto you the armour of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and to stand in all things perfect.”—*Ephes.* vi. 13.

MAN'S life is a warfare upon earth. Men, women and children—all are soldiers. We have taken an oath to fight on God's side against the world, the flesh, and the devil: we receive soldier's pay in the Sacraments, and a soldier's promise in the Kingdom of Heaven: we are soldiers in war-time: there is no peace this side the grave. Therefore we are called upon to keep strict discipline, to take to ourselves the armour of God, or, as the Greek has it: “ the panoply ” or “ whole armour of God,” in order to be ready for the evil day, the day of battle, the day of fierce temptation.

Let us consider attentively this armour of God as presented to us by the Apostle.

“ Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of justice.”

“ In truth ” at once suggests that the “ loins ” is to be interpreted of the mind; as St Peter says:

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

“having the loins of your mind girt up.” (1 Peter i. 13.) Keep your thoughts which are the springs of action in discipline, in the presence of the truth; “being sober,” as St Peter insists, not indulging in the idleness of curiosity, not building foolish castles in the air; “whatsoever things are true, whatsoever modest, whatsoever just, whatsoever holy, whatsoever lovely, whatsoever of good fame, if there be any virtue, if any praise of discipline, think on these things.” (Phil. iv. 8.)

We must exercise restraint as to how we feed our thoughts, as to what books we read. Even respectable people seem to think they may read anything that does not fall below the very low standard of propriety which now prevails. Doubtful novels, doubtful poetry, such as they would not care to read aloud or to hear read—the last clever bit of infidelity—nothing comes amiss. It is the fashion, and they must see what it is all about. If you were to see a well-dressed young man or young woman picking up bits of orange-peel and cabbage-stalks out of the gutter and eating them, you would say: “For all their good clothes, they must be starving or mad.” It is more monstrous to abuse the mind by feeding it in the uncouth manner so many do. You know that, in Catholic countries, the Church prohibits the reading of certain books of an immoral or irreligious character, making a list of them called an Index. Every Christian who has the loins of his mind girt, will make an Index for himself.

And then if we escape, as we hope, sudden and unprovided death, a time will come, more or less long, during which we shall, by the necessary

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

isolation of illness, be thrown upon ourselves, in which the mind must feed upon itself, i.e., upon the thoughts it has gathered during past years. Ah, we shall then need something more sustaining than scraps of old novels and recollections of old castles in the air, from which the colour they once had of life and hope has gone for ever! We could wish then to have our memory stored, like an old monk's, with verses of the Psalms and antiphons, and above all with those words of Christ which are treasured in the Gospels; but no, we who made so light of the Church's warning against immoral and irreligious books, by a fatal perverseness neglected to make ourselves familiar with the holy Gospels, as though, because the Church has had to denounce the misuse of Scripture by heretics, the faithful were not to use them. If you do not make yourselves thoroughly acquainted at least with the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, you I mean who can, you are neglecting a most important means of grace. A great servant of God, the Venerable Louis of Blois, says the bare reading of the life of Christ in the Gospels will produce abundant fruit, if done piously and reverently. The woman with the issue of blood, by her faithful clinging to the hem of Christ's garment, received her cure, and the words of the Gospel are, as it were, the hem of His garment. Yet there are Catholics who have managed to do without reading the life of their Master, and yet have not had self-restraint enough to avoid reading the last blasphemy uttered against Him.

The "breastplate of justice" is that holiness of Catholic life which is the reward of self-discipline,

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

and that fortitude which results from our sober living in the light of truth.

“And your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace,” treading in His foot-prints Who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Hastening, walking, not merely standing, preparing by activity now for peace hereafter. Shoes, says St Jerome, signify exertion; we must wear them going across the desert of this world, to save us from the scorpions. In the Holy Land of Heaven we put off the shoes from off our feet, and follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, without danger and without fatigue.

“In all things taking the shield of faith wherewith you may be able to extinguish the fiery darts of the most wicked one.” Certainly our faith is a shield; the world complains of it, its reasonings fall off from it. But we might make it much more a shield, if we realised it in all its details by meditation, both against intellectual and moral temptations. “This is the victory which conquereth the world, our faith.” (1 John v. 4.)

“And take unto you the helmet of salvation.” The hope of salvation: “Lift up your heads, for your salvation is at hand.” “For that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory. While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen, are temporal; but the things which are not seen, are eternal.” (2 Cor. iv. 17, 18.)

“And the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” Our faith must not merely be defensive,

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

it must be aggressive. Our Lord used Scripture as a sword against Satan.

In fact, we are soldiers in an enemy's country; it is useless creeping about in disguise, and pretending to be civilians. The devil recognises the character of our Baptism and our Confirmation by which we are pledged against him, and he will not suffer us to be neutrals, even if this were possible. If, then, you do not mean to be mastered, take to yourselves the whole armour of God. Every day has its temptations, but the evil day comes of special trials—we do not know when, or of what sort—rebellion within, persecution from without, and then death-bed trials.

Earnestly consider what has been said about reading Holy Scripture. After the Sacraments, there is no more efficacious means of taking to yourselves the armour of God. Our Lord's own words as He said them, will have an effect upon our hearts and consciences such as they cannot have when translated into other forms. It is as though we heard His Blessed voice saying to us, amidst the waves of doubt and temptation: "It is I, be not afraid." If belief in and love of our Lord has not quite died out in this country, stripped as it is of all the Sacraments except baptism, it is owing to the way in which the New Testament is cherished and used. What might not its familiar use do for us, planted in the garden of the Church, if even in the prostrate church of Protestantism it has for so long produced leaves and fruit! Remember the words of the Gospel are the hem of Christ's garment.

23. TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE WORK OF CHRIST IN THE SOUL

“Brethren, we trust in the Lord Jesus, that he who hath begun in you the good work, will perfect it unto the day of Christ Jesus.”—*Phil. i. 6.*

WHAT is the good work which is spoken of as Christ’s work, not ours?

Our works are of many kinds. Some are good in their way in the order of nature. Man, inasmuch as he uses and develops the natural powers God has given him, inasmuch as with a wisdom surpassing that of the ant he provides for many years, inasmuch as he combines, as no other animals can, for objects of common utility, he carries out the law of his nature; and in so doing necessarily glorifies the Creator of that nature, and does good work.

But the good work of which the Apostle speaks is something different: it is principally Christ’s work, although, under another aspect, it is man’s work too. This work is sanctification. Now what is the meaning of sanctification? Sanctification means reunion with God. We were created in the image and likeness of God, with intelligence, but above all with free will; we could stand against

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

the current of circumstance which swept away all else in its course. But, besides this, we were created in a state of grace, of original justice, as it is called. This at once perfected our nature, keeping its different portions in due subordination, and united that nature to God.

1. The office of the passions to subserve reason.
2. The office of reason to adhere to God as its end.

Before the Fall, the most familiar, the nearest and dearest thought to the mind of man was God. The supernatural act of prayer was more natural to Adam than his conversation with Eve or his gardening in Paradise. The first word of all that he saw and heard and felt in Paradise was of God. To his eyes that garden whether by day or night reflected the smile of God. God was man's companion, more necessary to him than the companion like unto himself, whom God provided for him. God was more to Adam than Eve was, and this was not merely a truth of theology, as it is now, but a familiar fact which he appreciated through the whole of his nature. But when the Fall came, and our first parents were stripped of their supernatural garment of grace, it was as though they had lost the best part of their nature along with it. God had withdrawn His familiar company, and the passions rose in fierce revolt. Reason, based upon human prudence, could do but little to quell them: the basis was too narrow to support that human nature which had been meant to be a temple of God. Yet, as we know, God did not wholly abandon man: although He walked not with him as in the Garden, yet a rugged path

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

was at the very first pointed out to him by which intercourse with God, though no longer easy, was at least possible. Mortification became necessary; the path to life lay through death; the beauties of nature to man in his fallen state, although still speaking of God, were vitiated by the passions which they evoked. At last, after having long taught mankind, by patriarchs and prophets, the way by which they might return to Him, He took upon Himself our nature, not merely to satisfy the Divine Justice for our sins, but in order to teach us how to become one with Him again, how to enter into the old familiar friendship. This is the aspect of the Incarnation upon which I wish you to dwell.

The Church is the great institution for renewing the old friendship. In her services and in her sacraments Eden is planted anew, the sacred garden in which Adam walked with God. But our Lord is not content with this: He would be our companion in all our daily life. He will not satisfy Himself with the society of monks and nuns, He will have us all to be His friends. But do we correspond on our side? Remember it takes two to make a friendship, and even Almighty God will not violate human nature by forcing Himself upon us. But he pursues us everywhere, every way, provided only it be not the way of sin; it is the same to Him, He will be in the way with us, whether it lead to the Church, or to our homes, or to places of business; He desires not merely that we should address certain stated prayers to Him, but that we should recognise His company, think out our thoughts and projects consciously in His

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

presence, and with reference to Him. He will bear anything sooner than that we should forsake Him. A great spiritual writer says: "If God wearies you, tell Him that He wearies you: fall at His feet, and, in the spirit of St Peter, say: 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man O Lord.'"

Discover to Him your weakness, your incapacity for bearing His friendship, unless He strengthens you. The Catholic preacher's work does not so much lie in bringing a message from Christ, in talking about Him, as in reminding people that He is in their midst. He wishes to be the friend, and counsellor, and companion of each one of you, if you will let Him, not merely in Church, but everywhere, and your lives, however commonplace in their external circumstances, shall become beautiful, and wise, and noble, and worthy of eternal life, if only you will not shut Him out of them. He wishes to meet us, when He comes to judge the world, as friends, not as strangers. Can we expect Him to acknowledge us then, when now we listen to so few of the words He is saying to us, and prevent Him saying so much that He would willingly say, if we showed ourselves more willing to hear? The good work has been so often begun in us; we have begun to listen to His Holy Spirit, and then we have turned away; yet we must hope that He will perfect His work. Be it our part to co-operate by living in His presence, by continually reminding ourselves of it, by ejaculatory prayer; and our co-operation in this work will be more truly our work than anything else we can do, for it will abide, when all our other works perish.

24. TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE SIN OF SCANDAL

“Many walk, of whom I have told you often (and now tell you weeping), that they are enemies of the cross of Christ.”—*Phil.* iii. 18.

Scandalum Crucis. The world was scandalised by our Lord’s doctrine, by His law, by His sufferings, and by His death. When the disciples of St John the Baptist were sent to our Lord, to ask Him: “Art Thou He that art to come, or look we for another?”, we are told that “in that same hour He cured many diseases, and hurts, and evil spirits, and to many that were blind He gave sight”; and then “answering, He said to them: Go, and relate to John what you have heard and seen: The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are made clean, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, to the poor the gospel is preached: and blessed is he whosoever shall not be scandalised in Me.” (St Luke vii. 20-23.)

After all these miracles, scandalised! And now that we, the world, have become Christian, we in our turn scandalise Christ in His members, “become enemies of His Cross,” not by our Christian virtues, but by our unchristian lives.

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

“Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?”
(Acts ix. 4.)

“Blessed is he who is not scandalised in Me.”
Therefore accursed is he who scandalises Me in My members.

“It must needs be that scandals come,” Christ has said it, “but woe unto that man by whom the scandal cometh.” (St Matt. xviii. 7.) *Woe*, because the scandaliser is the murderer of the soul he scandalises. “He who shall have scandalised one of these little ones who believe in Me, it were better for him that he were drowned in the depths of the sea.” (St Matt. xviii. 6.) Scandal, a specially *diabolical* sin, “he was a murderer from the beginning,” the destroyer of the supernatural life. (St John viii. 44.) A sin directly against the Holy Spirit, wounding charity as nothing else does; compared with destruction of wealth, or of reputation. “He who loves his brother abideth in the light, and there is no scandal in him.” (1 John ii. 10.)

When Satan desired to tempt Job, God said: “Behold he is in thy hand: but yet save his life.” I say, do what you will with your neighbour, rather than destroy his soul.

Scandal, a sin directly opposed to the Redemption of Christ, for the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which had perished; whereas the scandaliser—— This was the argument of St Paul to the Corinthians, who gave scandal by their use of what they might use: “and through your knowledge shall the weak brother perish for whom Christ has died?” (1 Cor. viii.

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

11); and "now there are many antichrists." (1 John ii. 18.)

Christ holds us responsible for the sins we cause others to commit. "I will require his blood of thy hand." (2 Kings iv. 11.) In vain do we exclaim with Cain: "Am I my brother's keeper?" "The wicked man shall perish in his iniquity, but I will require his blood at thy hand."

The sin of scandal committed so carelessly, hardly counted as an aggravating circumstance; nay, you will urge in your excuse, "I would fain he should not perish," but you desired efficaciously to do that which you knew would be to his destruction, or which you might have known would be; and as a set off against this, there is a weak and worthless wish, such as hell is full of. You are responsible, and it is a question of refraining from that which is in itself sinful.

Where there is *no* sin, hear what St Paul says: "If my food scandalise my brother, I will not eat flesh for ever." (1 Cor. viii. 13.)

Who can tell what the consequences of one scandal are! How one sin opens out into another! Abyss crieth to abyss.

Each will carry his own burden, true, and sin is a personal matter, yes, but the scandaliser has made the sins of others his own. "Who can understand sins? From my secret ones cleanse me, O Lord; and from those of others spare thy servant." (Ps. xviii.)

General duty of not giving scandal, of helping one another, bearing one another's burdens.

Impossibility of not influencing one another, for good or for evil.

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

Special duties imposed by special relations of fathers, priests, etc.

Duty and blessing of not being scandalised, the reward of not giving scandal.

Let us pray with the Psalmist: " Deliver me from the scandal of those that work iniquity "; save me from scandalising others, and from taking scandal myself. (Ps. cxl.)

25. TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL

“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away.”—*St Matt.* xxiv. 35.

It is part of God's ordinary Providence that even His greatest works should spring from small beginnings. The greatest of all God's works, that work which He came upon earth to do, was the establishment of His Church. For this He passed thirty-three years in toil and suffering, and then died upon the Cross. Yet, when our Lord had ascended to His Father, how very small, and to all appearance contemptible, was the grain of Christianity which He had left behind Him. It was the grain of mustard seed, sown indeed, but with scarcely a leaf as yet appearing above the surface. Eleven poor fishermen, rude and uneducated, whom our Lord's voice had called from their nets, men as far as we know in no wise remarkable above their neighbours for intellectual gifts or moral courage. A few hundred other disciples, of whom Joseph of Arimathæa and

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

Nicodemus alone are mentioned as being of the rank of what we should now call gentlemen. This was all. Upon their exertions, upon their success depended the reign of Christ upon earth, the triumph of His Church. How monstrously absurd would it not have sounded to the proud Roman, at the first preaching of the Gospel, if he had been told that a few men, the mere dregs as he would have esteemed them of a conquered nation, would one day be his conquerors, nay, more, would achieve this conquest not with the sword and spear, but with, as far as they were human at all, intellectual weapons: that these were to be Jews, of the very nation that had so long been a proverb with their Roman conquerors for credulity and superstition. We all of us know more or less this wonderful story, typified by the mustard seed in the parable.

When Christianity was first preached, the greater part of the known world was subject to Rome; the religion of Rome had spread far and wide among the conquered nations. It prevailed with the superstitious masses by the wonderful elasticity with which it adapted itself to all and every kind of superstition, and by its habit of incorporating with itself, and giving a Roman stamp to, every form of national idolatry. It recommended itself, on the other hand, to the philosophical sceptic, who, as was commonly the case with the educated heathen of the day, doubted of the supernatural order altogether, by only requiring of him an outward occasional conformity to it as to a political institution, at once respectable for its antiquity and highly useful as a bond of

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

social union. What had a religion to fear that had, at the same time, though on different scores, the sympathies of the rude masses and of the educated minority? above all what had it to fear from a foreign sect originating in a conquered people, whose members had not even found favour with the majority of their own countrymen? Yet so it was, after the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles in the Upper Room of Jerusalem, the wondrous work began. Our Lord's promise was indeed fulfilled to the letter, that His Apostles should do even greater works than He. Rapidly, in less than thirty years after the Ascension, the Gospel had spread through Syria and a large portion of Greece and Asia Minor. In the year of our Lord 46, the Prince of the Apostles passed from his see of Antioch to the imperial city of Rome, thus carrying the Holy War into the very seat and stronghold of Paganism. Ten years after, he was followed by St Paul, who was destined by Divine Providence to finish his laborious mission in that city, and to aid St Peter in establishing that Roman Church, whose influence was to extend to regions that had never even heard of Pagan Rome. The Christians seem at first to have been regarded by their Pagan adversaries with more of contempt than dread, or even hatred. It is generally supposed that St Paul, who had appealed to Cæsar from the local authorities of Palestine, was acquitted by the Emperor Nero, and allowed to remain at liberty in Rome under a sort of surveillance till his martyrdom in A.D. 67. The first persecution of the Christians, in A.D. 64, was rather the result of

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

the Emperor Nero's blood-thirstiness and love of tormenting, than of any notion that Christians were really formidable antagonists. The subsequent persecutions, up to that of Decius in A.D. 258, had their rise rather in the superstitious fury of the populace, excited and directed by the Pagan priesthood, than in imperial jealousy. It was not until the contest had lasted for more than two centuries that the Emperor of the day and his advisers saw that, unless Christianity was to revolutionise the Empire, it must be met by persecution on a wider scale, and a more systematic plan than had hitherto been adopted. The Pagans for some time believed, or affected to believe, that Christianity was an enthusiasm or religious mania of Oriental origin, pretty much confined to the class of slaves, and not likely to extend beyond it: but when, to their astonishment, they saw members of the richest and noblest families testifying their adherence to it, and sealing their testimony with their blood, they began to regard it as a contagious malady, which was to be guarded against with the utmost care, and to which the severest remedies were to be applied. The imagination of the populace was excited by the hideous accounts of the enormities perpetrated in Christian assemblies. The secrecy of the action of Christianity, influencing the Pagan masses about it, like the leaven in the Gospel, gradually produced distrust and suspicion. Persecution succeeded persecution, but still Christianity grew. The blood of its martyrs was to it as a fertilising rain, and the seed that our Lord had sown had become a widely extended plant, even when

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

as yet confined to the Catacombs. Whenever the heavy hand of persecution was lifted off it for a little, it appeared above the surface, and, during the long peace immediately preceding the fiery persecutions of Decius, Christians had built churches in Rome.

It was about the year A.D. 286 that the last and most terrible of all the persecutions broke out, under the Emperor Diocletian. The Pagan government was by this time fully alive to the fact that, unless Christianity could be crushed out by main force, Paganism must fall. Edicts consequently were issued ordering that all the Churches and sacred books of the Christians should be destroyed, that Christians who were in the enjoyment of any rank or office should at once be deprived of it, and that those of the lower class were to be executed forthwith. This persecution raged with more or less violence under Diocletian and his successor Maxentius, from A.D. 286 to A.D. 312, that is to say for about twenty-five years. Within that time, the white-robed army of martyrs received many of its most illustrious members; among others St Sebastian, and St Agnes, the former an officer high in favour with Diocletian, the latter a young girl of tender years who in the midst of the corrupt society of Rome had consecrated her virginity to God. In the same persecution fell the glorious Theban legion, one of the most distinguished regiments of the Roman army. They, with one accord, refused to offer sacrifice to the false gods of Rome, and, brave soldiers as they were, stood calmly in their ranks,

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

and submitted their necks without resistance to the sword of the executioner.

At last, when every expedient that fear and hatred could suggest had been tried in vain, the last persecution ceased with the victory of Constantine over Maxentius A.D. 312.

After the conversion of Constantine had given the imperial sanction to the new religion, not only did it spread more rapidly than ever, but people began to be aware of the marvellous progress it had been making, even during the most trying periods of persecution. They saw that it was no longer a herb, but a mighty tree, inviting all the nations of the earth to rest among its branches. But the time of the Church's trial was not yet to cease. Scarcely was it released from Pagan persecution, when the terrible blight of the Arian heresy, the heresy that denied that our Lord was of the same substance with the Father, in fact that He was really God, fell upon it, and with so deadly an influence, that the Church almost seemed for a time to fail beneath it. But God brought it triumphantly out of this second and most fearful trial, and when the flood of barbarians poured over the shattered remains of the Roman Empire, the only institution that survived was the Christian Church, and it did not merely survive, but drew, as it were, fresh life from the impetuous flood that swept over the face of society. Scarcely was the shock of each new invasion over (for the barbarian hordes succeeded one another like the waves of the sea), than the Church set about moulding into Christian shape the fresh mass of barbarians by which it found itself surrounded; and the rapidity

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

with which Christianity spread among these wild western tribes equalled, if it did not surpass, the rapid success that attended the first preaching of the Gospel among the civilised nations of the earth. The result was a general state of society far more Christian in its character than the half-Pagan, half-Christian civilisation, which for some time still lingered in places under the protection of the court of Constantinople. So powerful is the influence that the Christian Church has exercised upon the very organisation of modern society, that even those who do not profess Christianity are different from what they would have been, if Christianity had never existed. The Church has exhaled, as it were, a certain virtue into the very air, and even those people who are loudest in their clamours against her, are not a day of their lives without receiving inestimable benefits at her hands. It was the fashion introduced by French infidels in the latter half of the last century, to talk much of the natural virtues of Pagan times, and to speak of the present world as having degenerated from the ancient. Nothing can be more untrue; I believe that no sound student of Antiquity ever dreams of using this language now, and it is acknowledged on all hands that every research into the condition of ancient Pagan society gives glimpses of a state of hideous immorality compared with which the most immoral and irreligious city of modern times would appear virtuous, and that the truth of that terrible list of charges which St Paul makes against the Pagan world in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, is only too amply confirmed. That it was full of all unclean-

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

ness, dissolute without affection, without fidelity, without mercy. Even if the wicked are as wicked now as they were then, at least vice is not so rampant, so open, and therefore not so contagious. Now, though the evil one has great power, he is still chained.

And now, it is almost a difficulty for us to believe that the noble tree of the Church, such as we now see it, could ever have been the little seed that it once was. That tree, upon which God in His mercy has grafted us, is ever spreading its branches further and further over the world of nations, and though here and there a goodly branch be broken, yet we know that the tree will go on flourishing and increasing as long as the world lasts. It might have been God's Providence that the marvellous work should have been begun and ended by one instantaneous act of His Almighty power, but in His Wisdom He has chosen otherwise; He has chosen rather that His Church should follow the gradual development of a plant, and that, like the mustard seed, it should begin by being even the smallest of its order, though it was to end in being a tree in which the fowls of the air should dwell. This is, as I began by saying, but a particular example of God's general Providence. In proportion to the greatness of the matured work is the smallness of its beginning, the gradualness of its development. This is especially the case in God's dealings with our individual souls. He incites us by the inspiration of His grace to do some little thing, to take some little step in the right direction towards our sanctification. If we will but take it, God alone

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

knows to what it may lead; as long as we decline to take it, our spiritual life is at a standstill. We persuade ourselves that it is a slight thing, not worth the effort it will cost. Perhaps it may be our morning's meditation, or a Mass more or less in the week, or the sacrifice of some pleasure or other. Perhaps what is required of us is something more serious, to take the first step away from some positive evil to which we are habituated, and then often it is almost a feeling of despair that keeps us back. We feel that this one virtuous act can do so very little, at any rate can put but one step between us and our bad habit, that it will take so very long before a habit of the contrary virtue can be acquired. Let us take this first step, whether it be away from actual sin or towards a higher degree of perfection, and leave our further progress to God. He will provide. We must take the first step before we can take the second. With God's grace, when we reach heaven, we may look back at that first little step that seemed to lead nowhere, as the origin and germ of our sanctification. Let us never allow the devil to persuade us that anything which God asks of us is insignificant. It was revealed to St Teresa that if she had not, in obedience to the Divine inspiration, discontinued some slight bad habit which hardly amounted to sin, she would have been lost. Here, then, we have the little seed that was to produce the mighty tree, a slight mortification that was in a certain sense to be the germ of the exalted perfection and consequent glory of a St Teresa. Who knows to what extent this may be God's Providence in our regard also?

SERMONS AND NOTES OF SERMONS

Let us, then, perseveringly pray that God may bring to perfection all the seeds of His grace which He has planted in us, that if possible not one of them may be lost, but may all spring up unto eternal life.

